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I. *Aim:* The aim of this quarterly shall be to provide a forum (1) for the discussion of Christian faith and life on the basis of the Lutheran confession, (2) for the application of the principles of the Lutheran Church to the changing problems of religion and society, (3) for the fostering of world Lutheranism, and (4) for the promotion of understanding between Lutherans and other Christians.

II. *Policy:* The editors will welcome contributions that are likely to be helpful in the furtherance of the aims set forth above. It will be required of such contributions that they be frank and fair in their discussion of moot questions; that they be free from controversial animus; and that their contents be of real scholarly and practical value to the readers. Difference of opinion between contributors, or between a contributor and the editors, does not of itself exclude articles from publication since the editors do not hold themselves responsible for the opinions of contributors.

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The Ministry of Evil Men in the Church

By Harry F. Baughman

A DISCUSSION of Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession could perhaps more appropriately be committed to a synodical president than to a professor of homiletics. For who else can speak with such deep feeling and authentic knowledge on the subject of "The Ministry of Evil Men in the Church"? Out of the storehouse of his experience the pastor of pastors can on this theme, like a good scribe, "set forth things both new and old." He sees, to use George Bernard Shaw's phrase, "the evil that good men do." The "care of all the churches" becomes doubly a care through the frailties and perversities even of men of good intent. And to give a quasi sanction to the ministry of evil men in the church must seem to the administrator like opening a veritable Pandora's Box.

It is scarcely likely that the authors of the Confession envisioned the variety and complexity of the problems contained like a seed in their thesis. They were not setting down a formula for the government of the church. They were rather setting forth the logical development and consistent sequence of doctrines earlier affirmed. The statement of the Confession on the ministry of evil men is neither an explanatory parenthesis nor a repetition and expansion of the material of the preceding article. It is an essential unit in the total structure, a stone set in its proper place in the building. It has an explicit origin, meaning, and purpose.

I

Like many statements of truth and doctrine this article grew out of a specific need. There was for one thing the necessity for answering the natural questions of anxious souls: "How can one find certitude?" "Can I be sure that the sacraments are valid and effective for me?" "How can I know that in my baptism I have been truly baptized, or that in partaking of the elements of the Eucharist I am not eating and drinking damnation unto myself?"

The Reformation had taken away one ground of certitude which

many believers, even to this day, have found reassuring, namely, the dictum of the church. A different concept of authority had emerged. The believer's assurance no longer rested upon the word of a divinely sanctioned and infallible hierarchy. Instead, each believer was one of a universal priesthood with direct access to the gifts of God equal with every other believer. The sacraments were administered to him by one like himself, a fellow member of the communion of saints, and not by one clothed with the authority of a special rank. The *absolvo te* of the priest had been replaced by the word of Scripture "the spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, and if sons then heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). And this word was accessible to all believers alike.

At the same time that the Reformation was shaking old bases of authority and giving a new definition of the church, it was throwing a clear and revealing light on the abuses and excesses of the clergy. Luther in his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520) described bluntly one element of the evil that possessed the clergy: secularization. He also hinted broadly at the other evil: the scandal of fleshy lust. "They [the princes of Rome] skim the cream off the bishoprics, monasteries, and benefices, and because they do not venture to turn them over to shameful uses as they do in Italy, they only practice for the present the sacred trickery of coupling together ten or twenty prelacies and taking a yearly portion from each of them so as to make a tidy sum after all."[1]

The whole awakening spirit of the age, which incidentally was not limited to the dissenting reformers, served to turn the spotlight upon the scandalous conditions that existed. Voices of protest, especially from groups of the laity, were lifted. Erasmus said that the laity so thoroughly scorned and disliked the priests that to call a man a monk or a cleric or a priest was an unpardonable insult. A pope had rebuked a vicar of Rome for issuing a decree requiring all ecclesiastics to give up their concubines. His justification for the rebuke was that all priests kept them and that it was no sin. The "hint" of Luther in his *Address to the Nobility* is given full expansion in Friedrich von Bezzold's description of the moral state of the clergy.

> The licentiousness of the secular clergy as well as that of the monks had reached a position of flourishing that was positively repulsive. In vain did bishops

1 *Works of Martin Luther,* Philadelphia ed., II, 82.

and synods issue rules against clergymen living with women. Concubinage continued as before. And the pastor's cook, who would have needed only the church's blessing to be his wedded wife, was still a rather innocent phenomenon compared with the activities that turned the monasteries into veritable high schools for training in the most monstrous immorality. The bishops finally resorted to the rather dishonorable means of setting up a money charge for concubinage among their subjects, since it could not be done away with anyhow. . . . Priests quite publicly held baptisms for their own children, or arranged formal weddings for their daughters, just like any non-clerical head of a family. It can be taken for granted that the scorn of the laity constantly received rich nourishment from these "waitresses" and bastards of the priests. . . . But the worst fruits of the concubinage were not found among the secular clergy but in the official homes of "poverty, chastity, and obedience." . . . Earnest voices from circles of the secular clergy as well as the monasteries, circles that were friendly to reform, have reported things that the worst scoffer could not have improved upon. . . . Geiler of Kaisersberg pronounced the unreformed monasteries, one and all, as nothing but roguery. "The young monks and nuns you are making, they too will become whores and rogues." . . . The cloisters of women, especially, were the homes of shameless promiscuity.[2]

The laity were scandalized by the immoral behavior of the clergy. These conditions, set in a clearer light by the Reformation, made everyone aware that not all who speak in the name of God or wear the livery of the church are actually men of God. Ecclesiastical robes may conceal a mass of corruption.

Now, the question naturally arose in the minds of believers, "What is the value of the sacraments if they are administered by men such as these?" If the church is the congregation of true believers where the Word is purely taught and the sacraments rightly administered, cannot wicked men enter the fellowship freely?" "And if it is possible for evil and hypocritical men to mingle with the faithful, they may even be chosen to administer the sacraments. Are the sacraments then made ineffective if they are received at the hands of evil men?"

The question concerning certitude was one aspect of the need for the statement of Article VIII. Closely related to this, like the reverse side of a coin, was the need for defining clearly the position of the reformers on an issue that this very scrutiny revived. Rome's answer to the calls for the moral reformation of the clergy was: "You are fighting a battle that has already been decided by the church. You are

2 Friedrich von Bezzold, *Geschichte der deutschen Reformation*, 83, 84 (translation by Abdel Ross Wentz).

in reality Donatists whose fallacy was exposed more than ten centuries ago."

Apparently even in the time of Jesus there were demands for judgment and exclusions "here and now." His parable of the wheat and tares—"let them grow together until the harvest"—reflects an awareness of the impatience of those who would at once purge the unworthy from the fellowship. When schisms in the church developed there was always the question, "Who represents the true church? Who is worthy to speak in the name of Christ?" The question rose in insistence in the third century, when Novatus led a schismatic party. It became even more demanding under the movement led by Donatus. His party demanded the purification of the church, and insisted that the moral quality of the bishops affected the validity of the sacraments. "How can he give who has nothing to give?"

Against this contention the Catholics insisted that "baptism is baptism even though administered by thieves and robbers; for it is not a man, but the holy Trinity, which bestows the gift." The argument of Augustine became the accepted position of the church. "The sacraments are gifts of God, and the moral condition of the administrator cannot detract from the value of the gift conveyed. 'What he gives is nevertheless real if he gives what is not his own, but God's.' "[3]

The extremes of the Donatists could not be maintained either upon the basis of Scripture or as a matter of realism in this present world. Yet every effort to secure a consistent walk and conversation in the church and among the clergy was certain to revive the issue. And there has always been in the church a body of opinion insisting upon the establishment of boundaries and calling for discipline based upon external and legalistic standards of judgment.

These, then, were the roots from which grew the statement of the Confession concerning the ministry of evil men in the church. The two questions relating to the validity of the sacraments, and the possible alliance of the Reformers with the untenable position of the Donatists required an answer.

II

The answer which Article VIII gives to these questions is the

3 Reinhold Seeberg, *History of Doctrine*, I, 319.

natural outgrowth and the consistent development of the principles and doctrines basic to the Reformation.

This answer begins with the concept of the church. If the church is, as the preceding article defines it, "the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered," this means that it exists as it is. The church is not a society of the morally perfect. It has not yet achieved its ideal state. It is still to be "presented without spot or wrinkle, a holy church without blemish." In this world its warfare is not accomplished. It is composed of mortals, no one of whom is without sin. Its marks are not any external signs or orders or standards, but the faith of the believers and the possession of the Word and the sacraments.

The reformers, especially Luther, went to the Scriptures and their revelation of the intention and practice of Jesus to gain their understanding of the nature of the church. They saw this truth very clearly. The church existed as the family of God throughout the Old Testament. Its distinguishing mark was its relation to God. It was the *ekklesia,* "called out" to be the family of God. All the provisions of its forms, its ritual, and its ceremonies were designed in view of the fact that its members were what they were, sinners in need of the mercy of God.

Jesus, when he came, did not terminate this church and gather or organize a new one. He "came not to destroy but to fulfill." He continued the *ekklesia.* He called men out, called them as they were, and commissioned them to be his agents and representatives. The distinguishing mark of this church was not any external sign or order or standard. The mark was indicated in its very name, church—*kyrios,* "the Lord's." These people were the Lord's, the "people for his own possession." Some of them may have been more conspicuously useful to the movement than others, or more righteous by the accepted standards than others. But this made them neither more nor less the church, "the Lord's."

The fellowship which Jesus gathered about him as the inner circle of his chosen witnesses did not have any outward standard of discipline. It included two brothers of boisterous, vindictive temperament, known as Sons of Thunder. There was a tax collector who shared the poor esteem of his hated class. There was a fisherman who could curse coarsely by way of proving his independence of Jesus. And there was a sceptic who questioned the very essential realities of his Master's

teaching and experience. There was even a traitor who was finally excluded from the fellowship not by the discipline of Jesus, but by his own act. And all of them at times gave evidence of the most human impulse of personal ambition and self-promotion.

Possibly nowhere is the nature of the church so clearly revealed as in the very institution of the sacrament of the Last Supper. The members of the *ekklesia* who sat down with Jesus that night at the table were these men with all their imperfections and failures. They were men who might have sung appropriately, had the hymn been in existence, "Just as I am without one plea." And it was into the rough, gnarled hands of this company that Jesus placed the elements and committed to them the sacrament for perpetual observance.

Manifestly the mark of this church was nothing that was external. It was a fellowship of those who were "the Lord's," bound to him by bonds that were inner, vital, and spiritual. They were his in faith, in love, in commitment. They were his because they had no righteousness of their own, but were sinners in need of the "righteousness of God which is by faith." They were themselves gathered like fish into a great net which draws in both good and bad, and they were to gather others. Not in this world, but in the final judgment was the separation to be made. They were to grow together, like wheat and tares in a field, not to be plucked up and separated by the clumsy hands of the hirelings, but only by the Lord himself in the Last Day.

This essential nature of the church, the congregation of believers, is reflected in every deliverance or conclusion of Luther's on the theme of the church or its order and practice. In his view the rock upon which Christ promised to build his church was "not Peter, but the confession of faith which made Peter a rock," and this "church is nowhere save where is found this rock, that is, this confession of faith." The church is not "a bodily assembly, but an assembly of hearts in one faith." No "unity of time, of place, of power, of work, or whatever else" can make it a church without the spiritual unity of "hearts in one faith." And the very nature of this faith is confidence in Christ, the Son of God, the only Saviour of men, who need a Saviour because they have no righteousness of their own. It was as a member of the church, in full Christian faith, that Luther wrote his hymn, *Aus Tiefer Noth,* with its lines expressing this truth.

Our pardon is Thy gift, Thy love
And grace alone avail us.
Our works could ne'er our guilt remove,
The strictest life must fail us.
That none may boast himself of aught,
But own in fear Thy grace hath wrought
What in him seemeth righteous.

The logic of Article VIII continues in the recognition of the nature of sin. It is a trait of the mind of man to confuse sin with "sins," that is to reckon sin in terms of external and measurable behavior. The deepest insights of Scripture, on the other hand, disclose sin as essentially a condition of the heart, of the inner nature. The question of the Pharisee to Jesus, "Which is the first and great commandment?" is indicative of the typical human view. Back of the Pharisee's question was the understanding of sin as an outward act, the violation of a law. He and his fellows could debate questions of conduct: "Is it a worse sin to do murder than to commit adultery?" "Is the man who robs his neighbor a greater sinner than he who violates the Sabbath tradition?" "Where in all the circumference of life and behavior should one's emphasis be placed in order to please God and eliminate the worst evils?"

There is an echo of this estimate in the position of the Donatists, and indeed of various groups and sects at all times. Men are to be adjudged righteous or sinners, worthy or unworthy, and are to be included in the Christian fellowship or excluded from it according as their lives conform in behavior to the established standards. The principle of judgment is external and legalistic. Back of the demands for the exclusion of the unworthy by the "Donatists and such like" is the practice of equating sin with acts of moral transgression and grading them as the Pharisee would have had Jesus grade the commandments of the law.

The teaching of Jesus on this issue is explicit. His reply to the Pharisee, significantly enough, carried his questioner at once to the inner life. "The first and great commandment is 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all the heart.' " It is not the circumference that matters, but the center, the heart. There is no sin greater than another sin, no commandment more important than another commandment, except the demand of love to God and love to fellowman.

That Jesus did not reckon sin a matter of the outward deed but

of the heart condition is apparent in the instruction of many of his parables. The Pharisee whose prayer was not acceptable to God was a man of exemplary behavior. He kept the commandments. He observed the ceremonies. He made his offerings of tithes. But his heart was turned away from God in pride and self-trust. The publican who "went down to his house justified" was by his own confession a sinner. But he found favor with God because his heart was turned away from his own abilities and turned toward God in humble penitence. The host who entertained Jesus was a notably righteous man. His exacting society regarded him highly. And the woman of the streets who came into his house to wash the feet of Jesus, his guest, was openly branded a sinner. Yet the parable which Jesus told of the two debtors rebuked the righteous Simon and became the prelude to the word of forgiveness to the sinful woman. And the reason for this was just the difference between man's definition of sin and God's. "Man looks upon the outward appearance but the Lord looks upon the heart." In the sight of God there were not at the supper a righteous man and a sinful woman, but two sinners. One sinner was rebuked because "he trusted in himself that he was righteous," and the other sinner was accepted because her heart was turned toward God in penitence and love; "her sins which were many were forgiven because she loved much."

It was only when Saul of Tarsus recognized this essential truth that he found peace. He could say of his old life in the law, "a Pharisee of the Pharisees, touching the righteousness of the law blameless." Yet this life of obedience to the law brought him no certitude. Not all his blameless conduct, his careful abstinences, his ceremonial observances, not even his energetic drive to stamp out a movement he considered the enemy of God's kingdom, could bring him peace. He cried out in despair, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" And he found deliverance and freedom only when he realized that his salvation did not depend on any righteousness he could attain, that he could never in this world cease to be a sinner, and that he was saved by the grace of God. The struggle for him was resolved when he accepted the truth which he declared in his letter to the Romans, "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-24). He no longer relied upon a righteousness that he could attain, but sought to "be found

in Christ, possessing a righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). When he yielded himself fully to this truth he experienced the freedom of a Christian man and testified of his experience: "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). And he was able then to close his question of despair—"Who will deliver me?"—with the exclamation of victory, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord."

Luther's struggle was similar to that of St. Paul. He wrestled manfully with the problem of sin and sought to find deliverance through the prescriptions of the church. Like St. Paul, he found no peace or certitude so long as he failed to realize that sin is a state of the inner life and not a matter of the outward deed. Only when he came to the realization, as did St. Paul, that a man is saved not by any righteousness that he has attained but by the grace of God through faith, did he find his victory. His Christian experience grew out of his acceptance of the fact that the nature of sin is inward and spiritual and no one is ever without it, but everyone may find deliverance from it.

The argument in numerous references of Luther's "Defense of the Articles Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull" sets forth his clear recognition of this nature of sin. "He who denies," he says, "that after baptism sin remains in every child tramples upon Christ and St. Paul." "St. Paul says in Romans 7, 'I had not known that evil lust and desire was sin except that God's commandment had said, Thou shalt have no evil desire.' Now, the apostle was not only a baptized man but was also a saint when he wrote this about his own evil desire, and that of all the saints. Whence did this evil desire come to him after baptism? It was nothing else than a remnant."[4]

After quoting Galatians 5, Luther says: "Whence comes this evil lust in men who are baptized and saints? Without doubt from the fleshly birth in which this inherited desire is born with them; and it continues even unto death and offers battle and resistance to our spirits as long as we live." "It is evident that sin remains in the baptized so long as they have flesh and blood and live on earth. . . . How can it be denied that sin remains in a saint after he is baptized? If it is not sin that wars against the good spirit and law of God, then I should like to be

4 *Works of Martin Luther,* III, 25.

told what sin is." As a comment upon the parable of the leaven Luther says: "The new leaven is the faith and grace of the Spirit, who does not leaven the whole lump at once, but gently and slowly makes us altogether like himself, new bread of God. This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being, but becoming, not rest but exercise; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road; all does not yet gleam with glory, but all is being purified."

Commenting on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, Luther continues in the above vein. "They are the prayers of men who are yet partly in the kingdom of the devil, partly disobedient, and partly guilty of dishonoring the name of God." He quotes Augustine in support of his insistence that sin remains with men after their baptism. "Certain sins, such as actual sins, pass away as works, but remain as guilt, for a murder is quickly done and over with, but the guilt remains until the murderer repents. On the other hand, this original sin which is born in the flesh passes away as *guilt* in baptism, but remains as a work; for although it is forgiven, nevertheless it lives and works and raves and assails us until the body dies, and only then is it destroyed." And Luther concludes this discussion with the words of Augustine to which he gives his full assent: "Sin is forgiven in baptism; not that it is no longer present, but it is not imputed."[5]

This understanding of the nature of sin—not the outward deed, but the inner spirit, not moral lapses, but the essential nature of the soul without God—is involved in the reasoning underlying this declaration of Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession.

The logic of the article may be traced through three distinct steps. The last of these steps is the recognition of the nature of the ministry.

A seed contains in germ the whole development of blade, stalk, and fruitful head which appears as a field of growing grain. The agriculturalist can see in the complexity of the harvest what is true to the nature of the seed, and what may be a "sport" or a graft. He sees the product, its true form, branches, development, and fruit in the seed. And he sees in the growing product the nature that was in the seed.

So the church—its nature, development, organization, and the processes of its life—is contained in the seed from which it came. And

5 *Ibid.*, III, 25, 27, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36.

the student of the life of the church can appraise its total form and development and distinguish between that which is a "graft" or an accretion of the years and that which belongs inherently to its essential nature.

The church as it developed under the impetus of the Saviour's leadership and instruction, and the leadership of his disciples and followers, was in the beginning a fellowship. Its organization was quite simple. As it grew in numbers and extent, and for the sake of the orderly conduct of its life and the prosecution of its mission, it became necessary to select individuals for certain responsibilities. They were chosen by the congregation, *from among the members of the congregation,* and appointed to specific tasks. The process was that of a spiritual democracy. Those who were gifted as teachers were chosen—called by the congregation—to teach. Those who had a gift for physical management were appointed to serve in this capacity; they were the *diakonoi.* Those who were qualified, often by age as well as spiritual ability, to act as spiritual leaders, were set apart for this duty; they were called to be *episkopoi,* overseers, or *presbyteroi,* elders. And so it is recorded, "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Thus the call and appointment came from God and was given effect through congregational processes. Those who were called to this service did not have conferred upon them by their call any indelible character or superior weight other than that which inhered in the office itself.

The most significant feature of this operation was its congregational aspect. The call was the call of God through the congregation. The authority was that which the congregation bestowed upon the individual, and that only for the conduct of his office. The one called was called as a member of the congregation. He was called to an office, not to a rank or order. The development of superior rank and authority was a later "graft" upon the life of the church. This Luther recognized when he said, "Bishops are greater than elders, not by a reality of divine appointment but by a custom of the church." The congregation, for the purposes of order and the accomplishment of its mission, called and appointed from among its own members qualified persons to whom it committed the office of "feeding the flock" with the Word of God and administering the sacraments. The act was an act of the congregation.

When St. Paul called the "elders of the church at Ephesus" to

meet him at Miletus and laid upon their hearts his solemn injunction to "feed the flock of Christ," he was counseling with none other than the congregationally chosen members of the fellowship. When Timothy received certain grace through the laying on of the hands of the *presbyteroi,* it was as one of the congregation that he was set apart by the appointed representatives of the congregation. His authority was that which came from God through the congregation and was conferred upon him for the mission to which he was called.

As congregations multiplied and the life of the church grew more complex, changes in the procedure of calling and choosing came. But the principle continued. The call was still the call of God through the orderly processes of the congregations. The congregational authority was not surrendered or lost when congregations united to accomplish jointly that which could not so well be accomplished by them singly. They agreed together to lodge certain well defined powers in their united body. God continued to operate through the congregation by way of the channels provided by the express agreements of the congregations. The definition of the call given by one body of the church serves to maintain this concept of the nature of the call. "We conceive of the call to the gospel ministry as the inclusive invitation of the triune God, the church, and the congregation or authorized agency of the church, to a member of the church to feed the flock of God through teaching the Word and administering the sacraments."[6]

This recognition of the true nature of the ministry and the call to it is so pronounced in the writings of Luther that its place in the logic of Article VIII is obvious. In his *Address to the Christian Nobility* he wrote: "It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests, and monks are to be called the 'spiritual estate'; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the 'temporal estate.' That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it; and for this reason, viz., that all Christians are truly of the 'spiritual estate,' and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as St. Paul says in I Cor. 12, we are all one body, yet every member has his own work, whereby it serves every other, all because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, Gospel, and faith make us 'spiritual' and a Christian people."[7]

6 *Minutes,* United Lutheran Church in America, 1938, p. 67.
7 *Works of Martin Luther,* II, 66.

Writing in *The Babylonian Captivity* on the subject of ordination Luther asserts most clearly his understanding of the ministry as an office and of the minister as one of the priesthood of believers.

> Of this sacrament [ordination] the church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the pope. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the New Testament. Now, it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God that which cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. . . . The church has no power to make new divine promises. . . . The promises of God make the church, not the church the promises of God. . . . Let this stand fast then. The church can give no promise of grace; that is the work of God alone. . . . I therefore admit that ordination is a certain churchly rite, on a par with many others instituted by the Church Fathers, such as the blessing of vases, houses, vestments, water, salt, candles, herbs, wine, and the like. No one calls any of these a sacrament, nor is there in any of them any promise. In the same manner, to anoint a man's hands with oil or to shave his head and the like is not to administer a sacrament, since there is no promise given to these things; he is simply prepared like a vessel, or an instrument, for a certain work.[8]

As the church grew away from this original understanding of the ministry and permitted the notion of "holy orders" to develop, grave abuses and evils entered into its life. The appearance of these evils, fostered by the differentiation of ranks and estates gave Luther opportunity for stronger insistence upon the New Testament concept of the ministry. In the section on ordination in his tract on *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* he wrote:

> They have sought by this device [ordination as a sacrament] to set up a nursery of implacable discord, whereby clerics and laymen should be separated from each other, farther than heaven from earth, to the incredible injury of the grace of baptism and the confession of our fellowship in the Gospel. Here indeed are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity, trusting in the external anointing by which their hands are consecrated, in the tonsure and in vestments. They not only exalt themselves above lay Christians, who are only anointed with the Holy Spirit, but regard them almost as dogs and unworthy to be included with them in the church. . . . In short, the sacrament of ordination has been and is a most approved device for the establishing of the most horrible things that have been wrought hitherto and will be wrought in the church. Here Christian brotherhood has perished, here shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, churchmen into worse than worldlings. . . . It follows that whoever does not preach the Word, called by the church to do this very thing, is no priest at all. And further, that the sacrament of ordination can be nothing else

8 *Ibid.*, II, 279 ff.

than a certain rite of choosing preachers in the church. The duty of the priest is to preach, and if he does not preach, he is as much a priest as a painted man is a man. . . . The ministry of the Word makes the priest and the bishop. Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian be assured of this and apply it to himself—*that we are all priests* and there is no difference between us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and all the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior.[9]

"All Christians are priests," Luther insisted again and again. Out of this recognition Article V of the Augsburg Confession was written. "That we may obtain this faith the office of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted."

These, then, are the steps through which the logic of Article VIII comes to its statement of doctrine. The church is the congregation of saints and true believers, not a society of the morally perfect. Sin is a condition of the heart, not a matter of external and measurable deed, and no one is without it. The call to the ministry is the call of the congregation to one of its members to serve in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. Since this is true it must follow that the sacraments cannot but be administered by men who are sinners.

The fallacy of the legalistic position—"the Donatists and such like"—is that its main attention is directed to the circumference of life. It assumes that sin can be measured and graded, and a man be pronounced worthy as he is able to bring the grade of his offense down, or unworthy as the grade goes up. It fails to perceive that the Lord, who looks upon the heart, sees only a nature that is sinful, while man, who looks upon the outward appearances, sees only an expression of the nature that may be controlled, directed, or restrained by many factors which differ with people, time, and place.

This understanding was possibly involved in the remonstrances of Staupitz when he became impatient with Luther's confessions of trivial faults. He advised the despairing monk to commit a big sin, to stop worrying about trifling faults and to sin greatly that he might have something really to confess, and for which to have a great forgiveness. Luther was still depressed, even in the face of the assurance that these sins were trifling. For he had the deeper insight to perceive that even

9 *Ibid.*, II, 279 ff.

if he was free from the "great, conspicuous sin," he was yet not free from sin. It was the sin of his inner nature that continued to weigh upon his conscience. And he found peace only when he came to the realization that this sin all mortals have, and this sin God freely forgives.

Neither Scripture nor a thorough understanding of human nature and experience permit us to believe that a community of mortals, a church, can so purify itself by setting a careful guard upon the behavior of all its people that it can become worthy to bestow the gifts of God's grace. If the sacraments must wait for their effective administration for hands clean enough to show no dark blemish against the pure white of the gifts themselves, they simply can not be administered.

But this does not mean that the humble believer is to be deprived of the sacraments. It was the clear recognition of all the truth involved that led the authors of the Augsburg Confession to declare unashamedly that "it is lawful to use the sacraments which are administered by evil men." Jesus recognized this principle when he noted that the scribes and Pharisees, who were often actually unworthy men, sat in Moses' seat and administered the laws of Israel. Yet he called upon the people to obey the laws and receive their decrees because of the divine sanction upon which they rested, and not because of the character of those who administered them. This reference paved the way for the great, positive affirmation: "Both the sacrament and the Word are effective by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men."

The value and effectiveness of the sacraments do not depend upon the character of the administrant. They derive their authority from the Word and command of God and his promise. St. Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans revolved around this principle when he cited Abraham as an example of "the righteousness which is by faith." "Abraham believed and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Abraham's "righteousness" did not come by way of the law, for the law was not yet given. It did not come through circumcision, for the rite had not yet been instituted. It came through faith. He believed the promise of God because it was God who promised. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:20-22).

Repeatedly human notions of righteous living have been allowed to get in the way of the clear perception of this truth by the church. The question of the Donatists sounded convincing and final when they asked, "How can he give who has nothing to give?" Reforming elements in the church still ask it with great plausibility. And it requires the clarity of an Augustine to keep steadily in view the truth that the gift is not given by the priest or administrant, but by God, and the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who lays the gift in the hand of the believer can not affect the value of the gift—as Luther said, "gold is not less gold when worn by a harlot in her sin and shame."[10]

When the church turns away from this perception and loses sight of the essentially spiritual nature of God's best gifts, it is in peril of losing the very gifts themselves. Their effectiveness is not derived from anything that man can add to them, either of ornate ritual or impressive personality. It is derived from the Word of God and the faith which the Word works in the believer. Without these (the Word and faith) the most elaborate ceremony, performed by the most respected and respectable officiant, is not a sacrament.

Everything that obscured or confused the true marks of the sacrament, the Word and faith, represented to Luther a grave danger. The outward form and surroundings of the sacrament were not of primary importance. He could even speak derisively of them.

> The Word is that which accomplishes results in human life. . . . And since the Word of God is the greatest, highest, and most necessary element in Christianity, for the sacrament cannot exist without the Word, but the Word can exist without the sacrament, and in an emergency one can be saved without the sacrament but not without the Word (for example, those who die before they are able to receive the baptism they desired), Christ has in this manner performed a still greater and more important miracle, namely, that they [the Catholics] had to preach the text of the Gospel freely and openly, not only in Latin but also in the languages of the several countries, so that it was made known to the whole world and in all languages to those who were chosen, while they nevertheless administered the sacrament and baptize in no other language than in the Latin, with hidden words which no one is obliged to hear.[11]

Luther was deeply concerned that no device of man, not even his shining character, interpose itself between the believer and the true Word offered in the sacrament. He wrote:

10 Large Catechism, IV, 59.
11 *W.A.*, XXXVIII, 231 (translation by A. R. Wentz).

But humility and reverence for God's Word have always been the true signs of the true holy church . . . while excesses and novelties in human devotions are the true signs of the devil. . . . I am speaking concerning the doctrine which must be pure and clean, namely, the dear, blessed, holy, and only Word of God, without any addition. But life, though it is daily directed and purified and sanctified by that doctrine, is not entirely pure and holy so long as this sack of the body, flesh and blood, lives. Nevertheless, while a person is in the process of purification and salvation and constantly lets himself be healed by the Samaritan and does not fall more and more into corruption, he profits by the Word and, in so far as he lets himself be healed and cleansed through it, he must be called clean. For the holy Christian church does not become unclean or impure so long as it holds fast and clear to the Word (which is her righteousness). You are clean (says Christ, John 15:3) not because of yourself but because of the Word which I have spoken to you.[12]

The Large Catechism stresses above all else the primacy of the Word.

Therefore we always teach that the sacraments and all external things which God has ordained and instituted should not be regarded according to the coarse external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, but as the Word of God is included therein. For thus we speak of the parental estate and of civil government. If we would regard the persons in such estate according to their noses, eyes, skin, and hair, flesh and bones, we should find them to look like Turks and heathen, and you might well proceed to say: Why should I esteem them more than others? But because the commandment of God is added, "Honor thy father and thy mother," I see quite another man, adorned and clothed with the majesty of God. The commandment (I say) is the chain of gold about his neck, yea the crown upon his head, which shows me how and why I shall honor this flesh and blood.

Thus and much more, must we honor baptism and esteem it glorious, on account of the Word, as being honored both in word and deed by God himself and confirmed with miracles from heaven. For do you think it was a jest that when Christ was baptized the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly, and there was nothing present but divine glory and majesty?

Therefore, I exhort again, that these two, the water and the Word, be by no means separated. For if the Word be taken away, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bathkeeper's baptism. But when the Word is added, as God has ordained, it is a sacrament and is called Christian baptism.[13]

Without the Word and the faith which the Word works there could be no sacrament. Wrote Luther:

12 *W.A.*, LI, 520, 521 (translation by A. R. Wentz).
13 Large Catechism, IV, 19-22.

A man can believe even though he be not baptized; for baptism is nothing more than an outward sign that is to remind us of the divine promise. If we can have it, it is well; let us receive it, for no one should despise it. If, however, we can not receive it, or it is denied us, we shall not be condemned if we only believe the Gospel. For where the Gospel is, there is also baptism and all that a Christian needs. Condemnation follows no sin but the sin of unbelief. Therefore the Lord says: "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned." He says not: He that is not baptized. He is silent concerning baptism; for baptism is nothing without faith, but is like a seal affixed to a letter in which nothing is written. He that has the signs that we call the sacraments, and has no faith, has only seals upon a letter of blank paper.[14]

Christian belief and practice must not permit anything to reduce or diminish the value and place of the Word and faith in the sacraments. This may easily happen. And as often as not in the common attitude, it happens through the stress placed upon human personality.

Shortly after the close of World War II there was a significant conference of church representatives in the United States, called to consider the strategy of the church in the light of world conditions, and specially of the new destructive force now in human hands. One of the most vital papers was presented by a distinguished professor of theology in an American university. His address was momentous in content and development. He was followed on the program by the President of the United States. During the delivery of the theologian's address the atmosphere was charged with expectancy. Secret service men moved into commanding positions. Technicians bustled about testing microphones, wiring, and connections. Signals were called, quietly to be sure, into microphones, each of which was labeled with the letters of the system which was to channel the message of the President to the world. Photographers stooped and crept to reach just the right place for a flash exposure. The President and his entourage, headed conspicuously by General Harry Vaughn, resplendent in glittering medals and ribbons, hovered in the wing awaiting the proper moment to make their entrance. Delegates craned their necks to get the first glimpse of the President. And through it all the speaker read his message. But the really important word of the conference was lost. Few actually heard it. It was overshadowed by the importance of the individual waiting in the wings, and blunted by the mechanics of communication provided and prepared for the President.

14 *Hauspostille,* XII, 204.

So the pure Word, the indispensable mark of the sacrament, may be lost because an individual overshadows it. The recognition of this led Luther at times to dangerous extremes in his insistence that the Word only is of primary importance. "It is in some measure fraught with greater danger," he said, "when God gives his Word through holy persons than when he gives it through those who are unholy, since unreasoning people are misled by this and cling more to the holiness of men than to the Word of God."[15]

This is exactly what had come to pass in the church at Corinth. The difficulties of the New Testament church came not only from the ministry of evil men. They sometimes arose through the ministry of exceptionally good men. The introduction of I Corinthians testifies to this. Christian people were magnifying the qualities of the human leaders and spokesmen who interpreted Christianity to them. They were in danger of losing the living Word as they proclaimed their personal and partisan loyalties. "I am of Paul," they said, or "I of Cephas" and "I of Apollos." The very excellency of the individual got in the way of the Word. And St. Paul sharply rebuked this rising contention. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:13). The apostle's remonstrance did not put an end to the practice. It flourishes perhaps more conspicuously in the modern church. And the word of the Reformers never ceases to be timely.

Hence it is easy to reply to all manner of questions about which at the present time men are anxious, as, for instance, whether a wicked priest can administer and distribute the sacrament, and such like points. For here conclude and say: Even though a knave take or distribute the sacrament, he receives the true sacrament, that is the true body and blood of Christ, just as truly as he who receives or administers it in the most worthy manner. For it is not founded upon the holiness of men, but upon the Word of God. And as no saint on earth, yea no angel in heaven, can change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, so also can no one change or alter it though it be abused. For the Word by which it becomes a sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or unbelief. For he does not say, "If you believe and are worthy you will receive my body and blood," but, "Take, eat, and drink, This is my body and blood," likewise, "Do this." (Namely, what I now do, institute give and bid you take.) This is as much as to say, no matter whether you be worthy or unworthy, you have had his body and blood by virtue of these words which are added to the bread and wine. This

15 J. Koestlin, *The Theology of Luther*, II, 56.

mark and observe well: for upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all error and temptation that have ever come or yet may come.[16]

III

There is, to be sure, peril in this position. To affirm that there may be "greater danger when God gives the Word through a holy person than when he gives it through those who are unholy" may be to open the door to clerical carelessness and license. To declare that the character of the administrant does not affect the validity of the sacraments may serve to cancel the effort to maintain high ethical standards for the clergy. If the sacraments are effective even though administered by evil men, why, it may be argued, need there be any concern about the character of the ministry? Does Article VIII not cut the ground from under those leaders and teachers who cherish the ideal "that the ministry be not blamed?"

This is the peril of any evangelical emphasis. St. Peter recognized this and, as he called Christians to a worthy walk and conversation, added his word of caution: "as free yet not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness" (I Pet. 2:16). St. Paul faced this issue when he expounded to the Romans his doctrine of grace. The assertion that men are saved wholly by the grace and free gift of God and entirely apart from any righteousness they possess created a troublesome question. And so after mounting to a climax in his development of the doctrine, he apostrophized, "What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). Does this doctrine of grace not remove the incentive for the cultivation of the good life in time, and the building of the better world here and now? Indeed, is it not better to sin more greatly that one may experience ultimately a greater abundance of grace?

The apostle's answer to his rhetorical question was unequivocal. "God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). The doctrine of grace was not in the mind of its chief exponent either a deterrent to good behavior or an encouragement to evil. This preacher of evangelical freedom sounded a clear call to a high ethic. He saw and denounced "sins" with unmistakable fervor and particularity. For a Christian to be free through grace never meant to the apostle of faith that he is therefore free to engage in gross sin be-

16 Large Catechism, V, 15-19.

cause it will not be counted against him anyway. On the contrary, he is called by his new life in Christ to a higher ethical standard. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof" (Rom. 13:13-14).

And by the same token the affirmation of the Augsburg Confession that "it is lawful to use the sacraments which are administered by evil men" is not to be taken as a justification for moral indifference on the part of the clergy, the sort of professionalism that reduces ministerial practice to the level of a performance. The article which makes this affirmation had one clear and specific purpose. It was meant to give spiritual security to the believer in his reception of the sacraments. He must not be shaken and dubious if perchance he discovers that hypocrites and blatantly wicked persons have administered these signs to him, but must understand that the gifts are valuable entirely on their own account. Their worth derives from their divine institution and not from the worthiness of the administrant.

This fact, however, does not excuse those who are called to administer God's most precious gifts from praying fervently and constantly, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23). For it is to be remembered that the call to the ministry is not only a call to administer the sacraments. It is also a call to "preach the Word." Indeed the primary emphasis of the Gospels and the Book of Acts is upon this phase of the ministerial function. The men commissioned by Christ himself received specific commands, "Go and make disciples," "As you go, preach," "Ye shall be my witnesses." They were not asked merely to be in charge of rites and ceremonies. They were set apart to give testimony. And the testimony that they and their successors give is reinforced by the power that manifestly works in them, or is weakened by its absence.

The recognition that all men are priests unto God does not level down the responsibility of the clergy. It raises the responsibility of all the congregation. The sacrament can not but be administered by men who are sinners. But like all the members of Christ's body the administrants have received the grace of God which calls them to newness of life in Christ Jesus, the Lord. And the reality of their faith, the spiritual

dynamic, will be a compelling witness unto men only as it expresses itself in deeds and a spirit that bear the marks of their true source.

It was not a Donatist, or a Puritan, but the apostle of grace who wrote to his pupil and successor a message of counsel for his ministry, containing such explicit prescriptions as these: "A bishop must be blameless, . . . sober, of good behaviour, . . . apt to teach, not given to wine, . . . not greedy of filthy lucre, . . . not a brawler, not covetous, . . . not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (I Tim. 3:2-7).

The ministers of the Christian church are always ambassadors of God. Most of what the world to which they are sent will know of the kingdom they represent is that which it perceives in their lives and spirit. They will be effective ambassadors as they are able to say confidently, "For our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes" (I Thess. 1:5). They may not hide behind the doctrine that the sacraments are not made ineffective because the men who administer them are not all they should be. For it is still true that the testimony by which the world decides the case of Jesus, decides whether or not it will even receive the sacraments, is often made ineffective by lives that contradict the witness. The ambassadors whose good tidings, the evangel of Christ, become effective are those whose very lives proclaim them to be "a colony of heaven." They are those whose sincere prayer it is "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

The Development of Luther's Views on Church Organization

By Frederick K. Wentz

WHILE THE form of church polity belongs to the realm of adiaphora for Lutherans, it can never be an unimportant matter. Luther gave it much attention, stoutly maintaining the necessity of some external structure. For him church organization had a divinely-ordained *function,* namely, to provide free course for the Word of God. Any *form* of government which fulfilled this purpose would have satisfied Luther since specific forms of church polity held no divine sanction for him. Nonetheless, he had to wrestle with the circumstances of his own historical situation before an evangelical church emerged.

The Reformer's basic views on organization stemmed directly from his understanding of the Word and the church. The Word is God in his dynamic, aggressive, communicative, down-coming quality. It is Christ and his Gospel. As such the Word constitutes the church, calls it into being. "God's people cannot be without God's Word."[1]

The church so created is primarily the fellowship of believers in Christ. Yet its purpose is two-fold, fellowship and proclamation. Thus it is also essentially the proclamatory agency of the Word. The special divine-human agents of God's Word are Scripture, preaching, and sacraments. These may be called the Word in a derivative sense, but they depend upon human and historical administration. They mark the presence of the true church, yet gathered around them may be many who belong to the church only in a derivative sense. At any rate, a visible, human institution is a necessity flowing from the very nature of the church. Its purpose is to provide free access to men for God's Word.

By the time of the Ninety-five Theses in 1517 Luther already held these ideas of Word and church.[2] In his "Lectures on the Psalms" of

1 *Works of Martin Luther,* Philadelphia Edition, Vol. V, p. 271; hereafter referred to as *Works.*

2 Cf., for example, Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen, 1932), Vol. I, pp. 288-289, 306; Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines,*

1513 to 1516 he described the church as the fellowship of believers constituted by the Word.[3] The preaching of the Word, he held, always creates a group of true believers.[4] However, they remain mixed in with a body of nominal Christians so that the institution which the Word also develops always includes the larger, mixed fellowship in its arrangements.[5] His dynamic understanding of Word and church, the twofold nature of the church, and the necessary function of an institution were ideas already held. They did not change basically, though the next dozen years brought conflicts, altered circumstances, and even major shifts in strategy. The shifts always involved non-doctrinal matters, such as forms of polity, or changed expectations in the practical situation.

The Papacy: Not a Divine Institution

Luther's expectations concerning the Roman Church altered considerably in the two years from the posting of the Ninety-five Theses to the debate with John Eck at Leipzig in 1519. He entered this period a devoted son of the Roman Church, concerned that the pure Word find free course within her. Thus he desired only to reform her in thought and practice.

After October, 1517, Luther's writings and ideas came rapidly before public attention. His earliest ideas of the church came to public expression only slowly because they were secondary to Luther's chief thrust. The Reformer first spoke up about indulgences and the corruptions involved, primarily because of his concern for the pure Word. The earliest controversy was over sin, grace, free will, and similar concepts. Not Luther, but his opponents Prierias and Eck, swung the discussion to the question of the church, knowing that there they could most readily establish him a heretic. The heart of Luther's attack lay in his doctrine of the Word, but in defending that doctrine he became committed to heretical statements most quickly on the subject of the church. He had formulated these ideas of the church in his earlier lectures, but in public disputation they had to be pulled out of him one

trans. by Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia, 1905), Vol. II, p. 235; Herman A. Preus, *The Communion of Saints* (Minneapolis, 1948), Chapter IV.

3 *D. Martin Luther's Werke,* Weimar Edition (Weimar, 1883-), Vol. IV, pp. 189, 400, hereafter referred to as *W.A.*

4 *W.A.,* Vol. III, pp. 258-259.

5 *W.A.,* Vol. IV, p. 240.

by one. And as he reemphasized them in the face of opposition, he was forced to draw their consequences for the first time in terms of their challenge to the authority of the Roman hierarchy.

Even in the Ninety-five Theses Luther attacked certain practices involving Roman dogmas concerning the church. In pointing out in thesis 58, for instance, that "the treasure of the church" is not the merits of Christ and the saints, for these work grace without the pope, he was saying something which undercut the claims of the Roman Church of his day.[6] In thesis 62 he showed his own major theme when he said: "The true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God."[7] The following year he was picturing the Roman Church as a man-made institution and the pope as an authority only when backed by a council.[8] At the same time he was ready to say that even a general council can err.[9] In June, 1519, Luther attacked the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Keys, pointing out that the Keys were not given to Peter and his successors but to the church, the believing community. Wherever the Word of God is preached and believed, he asserted, there are the Keys.[10] It remained only for John Eck, at Leipzig two months later, to identify Luther with Hus and draw from him the admission that councils actually had erred. Thus the last vestige of infallible authority for the Roman Church was destroyed for Luther's thinking, and the heretical implications for ecclesiastical organization which had long been inherent in his ideas of the church were now made clear and publicly expressed. An irreparable breach had appeared. The papal bull threatening excommunication and Luther's burning of it were merely part of the mutual, formal recognition of the split made evident at Leipzig.

The Papacy: An Acceptable Human Institution

Meanwhile Luther had already made it quite clear that he had no divinely sanctioned organization to take the place of that of Rome. Feeling that polity was a matter of human arrangement, he was willing

6 *Works,* Vol. I, p. 35
7 *Works,* Vol. I, p. 35.
8 *W.A.,* Vol. I, pp. 571, 582.
9 *W.A.,* Vol. I, p. 656.
10 *W.A.,* Vol. II, pp. 193, 208; for a more detailed discussion of this period cf. Preus, *op. cit.,* Chapter V, and Charles M. Jacobs, "The Genesis of Luther's Doctrine of the Church," *The Lutheran Church Review,* Vol. XXXIV (1915), pp. 141-152.

to accept the Roman structure even while he denied its divine origin. In the summer of 1519, preparatory to the Leipzig debate, Eck had presented thirteen theses and Luther answered with thirteen theses, the last of which asserted: "That the Roman Church is superior to all other churches is proved by the most worthless decrees of Roman pontiffs issued during the last four hundred years, against which stand the approved histories of eleven hundred years, the text of divine Scripture, and the decrees of the most holy Nicene Council."[11] In elaborating upon this thesis in "Resolution on Proposition XIII concerning the Power of the Pope," Luther pointed out that he did not differ with Eck about the fact of papal primacy but about the grounds for it. He was willing, he said, to give the pope primacy in honor but not in power.[12] That is, given the human situation, Luther was willing to recognize the pope's leadership on human grounds but not willing to recognize the papacy as a divinely ordained institution. His reasons for accepting papal primacy are interesting and important. First, the *de facto* primacy of the pope indicates the will of God. Second is Christ's injunction (Mt. 5:41) that if anyone forces you to go one mile you should go two. Third, we should not resist if God wishes to give us many rulers because of our sins. Fourth, those powers which exist have been instituted by God (Rom. 13:1). Fifth, St. Peter teaches us to submit to every human ordinance as the will of God (I Pet. 2:13). Sixth is the agreement of all the faithful who are today under the Roman pontiff.[13]

By this time his destructive efforts were complete, from the doctrinal point of view, yet the Roman Catholic organization remained as an acceptable human arrangement. His reasons for accepting papal primacy, aside from Scripture itself, amount to the common-sense appeal to numbers and a biblically inspired consciousness that God's will finds expression in the exigencies of a given historical situation. This argument reveals two important points, and implies a third, for Luther's thinking on church polity.

The first is that Luther relegated such matters as the form of polity to the realm of adiaphora. In the realm of doctrine, in matters directly affecting the faith, he was speaking boldly as a heretic, repudiating common-sense arguments and appeals to contemporary history. Yet

11 *W.A.*, Vol. II, p. 161.
12 *W.A.*, Vol. II, p. 185.
13 *W.A.*, Vol. II, pp. 186-187.

church structure was thought of as involving pragmatic decision and the acceptance of that which lay near at hand. It was the area in which one must learn suffering and submission. It belonged to "life" as distinct from "faith," as he later distinguished these: "When it comes to life we are ready to do, to suffer, to forgive anything our opponents demand as long as faith and doctrine remain pure and uncorrupt."[14]

The second point revealed here is Luther's conservative nature concerning outward circumstances, matters of organized human relationships. His was the conservative reformation. He sought always to remain a loyal son of the church that had nurtured him, faith and conscience permitting. Where he did not see direct hindrance to the working of God's Word, Luther's peasant origin, his very temperament, his single-minded religious concern caused him to be conservative in "life." At this point Scripture spoke to him of submission, suffering, and the cross.

A third significant idea, present here by implication, is the Reformer's expectations concerning the working of God's Word. It was a central part of his doctrine to extol the mighty and objective power of the Word in bringing salvation to men. He never ceased to stress that the Word always produces some fruit in the faith of its hearers or receivers. Frequently he quoted Isaiah 55:11: "so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." *But in 1519 he seemed to have high confidence that the Word could be freed to work with relatively little rearrangement of ecclesiastical affairs, whereas thereafter he progressively lost confidence in the objective power of the Word unaided by human devices.* Luther had formed the basic tenets of his faith several years earlier and he never really altered them. There was no shift in his conceptual formulation of the doctrine of the Word, nor did he come to question God's agency therein. But his expectation of the practical results did change. Out of his experience as a reformer and church organizer in the 1520's he was forced to reduce, for his planning, the significance of the doctrine that the Word always produces fruit. He became disillusioned as to the degree of effectiveness, the percentage of grain that would result from the seed of the Word in itself, without human aid

14 *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians,* trans. by T. Graebner (Grand Rapids, n.d.), p. 232.

or augmentation. He was increasingly disappointed in the ability of the Word of itself to make its way through the world of human institutions and into human hearts with saving power. However, in 1519 his confidence in the naked power of the Word of God was so great that he felt it could be freed to do its work effectively within the structure of the Roman Church. When this proved an illusion he was forced to give more attention to polity.

Ready to Reconstruct

Within the year Luther could see clearly that the structure of the established church would not fulfill its function of permitting God's Word to operate. Besides, the Roman Church was in the act of casting Luther himself out because he was pleading for the true Word. It became obvious, then, that an evangelical church had to be raised up. After the pause of a year, a time of reassessment, Luther published four significant tracts which marked his first constructive efforts. This was in the summer of 1520.

During the decade of the 1520's Luther was forced to establish a church. In seeking leadership in that task his strategy shifted markedly at times, and his thinking matured on the matter of practical polity in the midst of these difficult decisions, but his basic ideas in regard to church organization had been established firmly by 1520. They revolved around three important doctrines, those of church, Scripture, and universal priesthood.

His views as to the nature of the church were first systematically and publicly set forth in "The Papacy at Rome" in 1520. "I welcome the opportunity to give the laity some explanation of the nature of the church," he said.[15] He altered these basic ideas very little through the rest of his life. Furthermore, 1520 provides the best date to get his fundamental ideas most clearly presented because he had done his analysis, his digging down to lay the foundations bare, but had not become involved in building, including as that does particular commitments to be defended in the midst of current polemics and politics. One cannot, of course, take any one date and say that this was Luther and other years were not, but Luther's role in Reformation history has focused upon this period as the most fruitful in his life for subsequent Christian thought and life.

15 *Works,* Vol. I, p. 339.

However, his ideas of "The Papacy at Rome" were not new but simply an organized, public expression of ideas held before 1517. There are, he pointed out, three senses in which the word "church" is used: (1) the true, spiritual church, the *communio sanctorum,* for which he preferred the term Christendom, *die Christenheit,* rather than church, *die Kirche,* because the latter is so easily confused with the other usages; (2) the external organization or Roman hierarchy which has no Scriptural right to the term; and (3) houses built for the worship of God, also a confusion of language. The true church needs no bodily head such as the pope because it is a spiritual, essentially invisible community, wider than any outward organization, the congregation of the faithful, *eine Versammlung aller Christgläubigen auf Erden, die Gemeinde der Heiligen.* The pope has only human authority in external concerns since the church cannot have an earthly head. It is basically an object of faith, as the Creed says.

However, there are external marks of the church (also objects of faith), signs of the church, namely, the sacraments and the Gospel. These signs are related to the true church as the human body to the soul. "The external marks, whereby one can perceive where this church is on earth, are baptism, the sacrament, and the Gospel; and not Rome, or this place or that."[16] "This, indeed, is true, that just as the body is a figure or image of the soul, so also the bodily community is a figure of this Christian, spiritual, and as the bodily community has a bodily head, so the spiritual community has a spiritual head."[17] However, the external assembly, in which Gospel and sacraments are present, has the soul in it—the true church is present there. These are the main ideas of "The Papacy at Rome" and Luther's main ideas on the nature of the church as they touch upon external organization.

The second of the three important doctrines is the authority of Scripture. Though he had appealed to Scripture as his authority more than once before, Luther first clearly and forcefully appealed to it as final authority at the Leipzig Disputation in 1519.[18] "Nor is it possible," he said, "to force a Christian believer beyond sacred Scripture, which is peculiarly the divine law, except some new and proved revelation be added; for we are prohibited by divine law from believing except what

16 *Works,* Vol. I, p. 361.
17 *Works,* Vol. I, p. 353.
18 Cf. Holl, *op. cit.,* p. 317.

is proved either by divine Scripture or by an obvious revelation."[19] The role of Scripture as authority increased for him in later years. Always, of course, it needed inner authentication through the Holy Spirit and faith before it became the Word in one's own heart. But with the collapse of the authority of the Roman Church, from 1519 onward, Scripture became increasingly his authority in outward matters—in doctrinal development, in instruction, in polemics, above all in delineating the essentials of practical church life.

The third major doctrine which helped shape his conception of church organization was the universal priesthood of believers. This was long implicit and found frequent expression in these years, but was most familiarly presented in "Christian Liberty." Here Luther stated that each Christian individual is his own and his neighbor's priest, having direct access to God without the meditation of a set-apart priesthood. Faith is powerful, is brought by the Word, makes men pious, fulfills the commandments of the Word, unites the individual with Christ, makes him a king and priest, and gives him perfect liberty, though it will be exercised in the outward man by self-discipline and works of love. In place of the Roman hierarchy Luther expounded the universal priesthood of believers, which, coupled with the idea of the communion of saints, presents a kind of spiritual democracy. Theoretically all the church requires for its corporate life is the spiritual rule of Christ and the Word and such organization as is necessary to provide pastors, maintain preaching, and administer the sacraments. The responsibility for assuring the Word free course lies with the community of believers.

Seeking Leadership

By 1520, then, Luther had broken completely with the Roman structure and had enunciated his central doctrines which required some church structure and laid the responsibility upon the community of Christian believers. However, his authority, Scripture, did not prescribe for him the form of polity or type of leadership. Yet there was a dire need for leadership and that problem remained crucial during most of the decade. He always refused to set himself up as a final authority in such matters, though he had much advice to give.

1. *Princes.* Naturally he first looked hopefully to the calling of a

19 *W.A.*, Vol. II, p. 279.

council that would be representative of the whole church. But the pope and his churchmen would not call a council which Luther could recognize as free and representative. Luther therefore turned to the Christian princes. In "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility" he appealed in this emergency to the princes as those members of the community of believers who were in the best position to initiate the calling of a council. As he put it: "Therefore, when necessity demands, and the pope is an offense to Christendom, the first man who is able should, as a faithful member of the whole body, do what he can to bring about a truly free council. No one can do this so well as the temporal authorities, especially since now they also are fellow-Christians. . . ."[20] The princes were to act as Christian laymen who happened to be in a good position to provide emergency help in creating a church organization.

However, in the same tract Luther urged these same nobles in their divine right as temporal authorities, i.e., as princes, to undertake large-scale reforms against Roman prerogatives for the sake of public order and the protection of German citizens. It becomes necessary for us, therefore, to see Luther's distinction between public order in religious matters and that church organization which provides the necessary agency for the functioning of the Word.

Luther grew up in the frame of reference of the Middle Ages, in which church and state were the two divinely ordained arms of the Christian society or commonwealth, the Kingdom of God on earth, Christendom (*die Christenheit*), *res publica Christiana. Corpus Christianum* is the most familiar term for this concept. Following Scripture, Luther always showed a marked tendency to view submission to secular authority as the Christian's duty in obeying God. Furthermore, Luther viewed this dual nature of society, not as dividing and combining ecclesiastical activities and temporal institutions, but as a duality within each individual—between his person and his office, between his spiritual life and his station in society. It is in the latter respect that a man comes, by divine ordinance, under the secular arm and is guided by the Law more than by the Gospel. The Reformer gave great emphasis to the role of the state in life and to its contribution to the church. It provides order and therefore enables the church to come into existence. But more important for this discussion, the state is responsible under

20 *Works,* Vol. II, pp. 77-78; cf. Holl, *op. cit.,* pp. 285-286.

God to regulate, for the sake of good external order, such outward ecclesiastical matters as festival days, public ceremonies, and church taxes. Thus it was that in "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility" Luther exhorted the princes in their own God-given authority to assert their power in cutting away such papal privileges as annates, various appointments, reservations, etc. "Every prince, nobleman and city," he declared, "should boldly forbid their subjects to pay the annates to Rome and should abolish them entirely."[21] Yet in calling a council—that is, in initiating a reformed agency for the Word—princes were to act only as believing laymen who happened to be in a position to start things. The responsibility for the institution of the Word, Luther always felt, lies with the body of believers.

But the princes failed to respond to Luther's appeal for a free council to develop an evangelical church. In fact, it became clear within a year, at the Diet of Worms, that many of the princes could not be counted upon to act as evangelical believers and that a real representative council, sensitive to Luther's views, was then an impossibility. Luther looked for leadership wherever it could be found within the Christian community. This led him next to congregations.

2. *Congregations.* From 1522 to 1527 Luther found that the most practical and immediate way to organize a reformed agency for the Word was for a congregation of Christians in any given community to organize itself, though usually the secular authority was involved in giving support by suppressing public blasphemy and maintaining order.

In the winter of 1522 the enthusiasms, violence, and excesses of Carlstadt and the Zwickau prophets at Wittenberg brought Luther for the first time to the conservative side. Henceforth he fought on two fronts and took a middle position on most points. At this time he still had a large faith in the power of the preached Word to win its own way, prove itself, and create its own institution without force or human interference. When he got back into his own pulpit from the Wartburg, he told his people:

> We must first win the hearts of the people. And that is done when I teach only the Word of God. . . . But I would not make it an ordinance for them, nor urge a general law; he who would follow me could do so, and he who refused would remain without. In the latter case the Word would sink into the heart and perform its work. Thus he would become convinced and acknowledge his error, and fall

21 *Works,* Vol. II, p. 99.

away from the mass; tomorrow another would do the same, and thus God would accomplish more with His Word than if you and I would forge into one all power and authority.[22]

Two treatises appeared in 1523 which expressed Luther's views on church organization in this period of more democratic, congregational emphasis. In "Secular Authority" he maintained the right of judgment of the individual Christian conscience over against the institutions of church and state, and pointed out the limitations of secular authority in religious matters.[23] The second treatise made its point in its title: "The Right and Power of a Christian Congregation or Community to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved from Scripture." On the basis of I Cor. 14:31, 39 f. and other passages, Luther claimed Scripture "gives more than sufficient authority to the Christian congregation to preach, to permit men to preach, and to call preachers."[24]

Meanwhile he was aiding and advising individual communities in organizing themselves into congregations. He wrote to Nicholas Hausmann of Zwickau and to the people of Prague to advocate that congregations organize themselves, and it was in connection with giving advice to the congregation at Leisnig that he wrote the second of the above treatises.

However, it must be noted that these congregations were not voluntary groupings of covenanted and committed believers. They were rather each a parish, the organization of the whole community of baptized people in a given area. Nominal believers, even the unconvinced, were not excluded. Always the institution of the Word was, for the Reformer, a *Volkskirche,* including everybody. This is quite evident in the fact that Luther hoped during these years to bring together, within this larger grouping, smaller gatherings of convinced and experienced Christians. He sought opportunity to form an *ecclesiola* within the *ecclesia.* Such a gathering of the faithful would have special services and forms of worship and would maintain a real discipline while remaining always an active part of the larger communion. This idea was most clearly expressed in "The German Mass and Order of Service" of 1526. Here he advocated public worship in German for the edifica-

22 *Works,* Vol. II, p. 398.
23 *Works,* Vol. III, pp. 251-253.
24 *Works,* Vol. IV, p. 81.

tion and evangelizing of all who would gather, while the true Christians "would record their names on a list and meet by themselves in some house in order to pray, read, baptize, receive the sacrament and do other Christian works," including discipline and benevolent contributions.[25] But, he had to add, "I have not yet the persons necessary to accomplish it; nor do I observe many who strongly urge it."[26] This latter, the sense that the times were not right for realization of his ideal in church polity, was a large factor in his decisions throughout the 1520's. When, in the next year, he turned again to secular authorities for leadership, he seems to have given up the hope of forming such nuclei for he did not mention it again.

3. *The Visitation.* Luther's renewed appeal to the secular authorities was brought on by a number of factors. It was a time when the territorial princes were becoming more and more absolute in their power. In 1526, at the Diet of Speyer, Protestantism and the territorial system gained the upper hand so that states and cities came to believe they had the right to organize their own churches. By the time the second Diet of Speyer in 1529 reversed this decision and attempted to revert to the old ecclesiastical order it was too late to prevent Reformation organizations in many territories. Besides, there was a significant shift in Luther's own state when Elector Frederick died, for he had been slow and hesitant in making changes, whereas his successor, John, proved more aggressive in instituting reform.

Another factor that caused Luther to shift toward the authority of the princes at this juncture was his opposition to the sectaries. Democratic freedom sometimes leads to license, and in the name of the Word the fanatics were doing all kinds of things with which Luther could not agree. By 1525 he was ready to act against them whenever possible, and within five years he had gone far in the direction of church control and the routing out, with the help of the temporal sword and the use of force, of sectaries, Anabaptists, and heretics generally. He was never essentially a champion of religious toleration, since his single purpose was to free the Word to do its work, so that he readily came to believe that external force could be used to suppress the public expression of error. And more and more he met opposing groups of men whose consciences attested to a somewhat different Word from the Word as his

25 *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 173.
26 *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 173.

conscience knew it. Thus he ruled out more and more types as people having lying consciences: Roman Catholics, sectaries, Sacramentarians, Anabaptists. Not that the Reformer ever thought conscience could be coerced or ceased to stress winning men's hearts to the true Word of God. Nonetheless, all this multiplication of diverse and uncertain teachings hastened his swing to reliance upon the power of the secular princes.

But there was a third factor that contributed to Luther's movement toward appeal to the princes at this time. The Peasants' Rebellion, at its height in 1525, brought a strong reaction from him. His conservative nature and understanding of Scripture caused him to abhor resort to force in insurrection against "the powers that be" and he was anxious to keep his religious reformation from bogging down in hopeless social uprisings. Also, the chaos resulting from the struggle made democratic action in church affairs much more difficult and furthered the absolute power of the princes, ultimately in all areas of life.

Similarly, as the decade of the 1520's moved into its later years, the need for order within the church increased and the crisis became more acute. The evangelical movement was spreading far and wide. There was great need for some order of worship over against survivals of the Mass in many localities; the dearth of pastors and teachers and, indeed, leadership of all kinds made action imperative. Luther finally sought the intervention of the princes as *Notbischöfe,* emergency-bishops.

After others had suggested it and Luther had made tentative approaches to Elector John, he became urgent in suggesting a Saxon Visitation in November, 1526, picturing the desperate religious and educational needs.[27] The real Visitation got under way in the summer of 1527. The "Electoral Instruction" for it gave the visitors spiritual as well as secular authority, both stemming from the power of the prince. But the next year a manual of instruction to be given to the clergy carried a preface by Luther which set forth more carefully the role of the prince in this matter. Here he made it clear that the elector was responsible as secular ruler to maintain order but not to teach and rule

27 For a more detailed discussion of the Visitation cf. John O. Evjen, "Luther's Ideas Concerning Church Polity," *The Lutheran Church Review,* Vol. XLV (1926), pp. 227-237; Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther's Ecclesiology and His Concept of the Prince as *Notbischof," Church History,* Vol. XXII (1953), pp. 130-133.

spiritually, whereas for the love of Christ the elector was to go ahead with the Visitation, exercising the common rights of the community of believers.[28]

Accepting State Control

With the Saxon Visitation our story can conclude, for this was the first clear step toward permitting princes and magistrates to wield final authority in the regulation of church life in sixteenth century German Lutheranism. Thereafter that trend became virtually inevitable; likely it was inevitable in that situation even before the Visitation was approved, for the princes simply had all the power. It is important to note, however, that Luther did not desire such a solution to the problem and that he always insisted that the state had no special rights in spiritual matters, i.e. in matters relating to the agency of the Word in itself. It is also important to note that Luther always considered the initiating role of the prince to be a temporary one, that of a *Notbischof*. In the decade or more following 1528 he frequently insisted on these two points.[29] Nonetheless, he did not at all change the fact of state dominance of the church.

But it is more significant to see why Luther permitted church polity to go in a direction he would not have chosen. It is not enough to say that he was powerless to change the matter. A decade earlier he was bold to resist the Roman Church which then seemed all-powerful. The difference here is that he did not feel that faith and doctrine were involved. Organization belonged rather to that area of life wherein Christians must primarily show obedience and suffer whatever befalls, so long as the pure Word is unhindered in its expression.

The matter may be summarized like this. Luther's doctrine of the church required an institution to be the agency of the Word. Scripture was the authority concerning that Word and its agency, and the community of believers was responsible for them. But Scripture had not indicated and the community of believers had not created a specific structure. The initiative of the state was necessary and acceptable in this area of merely human decision and action. In 1519 the Roman Church, as the *de facto* polity, would have been acceptable. In 1527 the

28 *W.A.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 200, 197.

29 For instance, *W.A.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 295; Vol. XLVI, pp. 737-738; Vol. LIII, p. 255; cf. Holl, *op. cit.*, pp 285-286; Spitz, *op cit.*, pp. 133-134.

prince, as the *de facto* power, had become acceptable for this task. Though church organization was important, it was always a matter of pragmatic decision.

However, it must be reemphasized that Luther had meanwhile lost confidence in the unaided Word to win its way among human institutions and into the hearts of men. In 1519 he could accept the Roman Church's structure because he felt that the pure Word of God would readily purify that structure or create its own organization once it was released and preached with power. By 1527 he had met with many discouragements in this regard and turned to the prince to provide strong external props that would give firm structure to the agency of the Word. As the founder of Lutheranism located few leaders, met some who differed in their understanding of the Word, and learned of many who turned liberty into license, he became more intolerant and aggressive in fighting in behalf of the Word rather than simply freeing the Word to fight for itself. He became more willing to see public heresy suppressed; faith was coupled more with doctrine and the prophetic note became mode didactic; tradition, never belittled, received increasing emphasis and the office of a duly appointed ministry took on enhanced importance. None of this indicates that Luther's ideas changed in any basic way. But his practical expectations changed in the midst of the trying circumstances in which he sought to build an evangelical church. In 1524 he was urging Germans to receive God's word in its day of outpouring, since it was "a passing rainstorm, which does not return where it has once been."[30] And later he noted how high and hard a matter it is to receive the Word, adding: "It is soon said that by the hearing only of faith, the Holy Ghost is received: but it is not so easily heard, laid hold on, believed and retained, as it is said."[31] This shift in emphasis could be easily overstressed, for Luther always remained the great champion of the Word and never lost faith in its salvatory power. Nevertheless, in understanding his changes in strategy in his efforts to provide a church structure this loss of confidence is a basic factor.

Summary

Luther's understanding of the church stemmed from his central

30 *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 108.

31 *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), p. 211.

doctrine of the Word, for the Word constitutes the church both as the fellowship of believers and as the agency for the proclamation of the Word. In the latter capacity the church requires an organization, the function of which is specific—to give free course to the Word—while the form of it remains a matter of pragmatic and changing decision. These ideas were developed before 1517. In the two years between the Ninety-five Theses and the Leipzig Debate Luther came to challenge the papacy as a divinely sanctioned institution. Meanwhile he was willing to retain the papal structure as an historically-given human arrangement, thereby revealing his conservatism, his optimistic expectations concerning the Word, and his relative indifference to matters of polity. In 1520, having broken with Rome, he was ready to reconstruct and gave popular expression to the relevant doctrines—that of the nature of the church, that of the authority of Scripture, and that of the universal priesthood of believers. In seeking leadership in the following years Luther turned first to the princes as Christian laymen who were in an opportune situation to act. By 1523 and until 1526 he was encouraging congregations and communities of Christian believers to organize themselves with the help of secular authorities. But as the situation grew worse in terms of opposition, confusion, and misunderstanding, the Reformer turned again to his territorial prince and helped arrange for the needed Visitation which proved to be the first clear step in the trend toward state dominance of church organization. Luther wanted the prince to act only on a temporary basis and only as a Christian layman exercising the common right of believers. However, a degree of state control was acceptable under difficult circumstances so long as the pure Word found free expression, because such arrangements belonged to earthly not divine prerogatives and because the spontaneous preaching of the Word of God had not called forth spontaneous leadership and organization. Thus orderly steps had to be instituted by those who had the power to do so.

Despite the title of this article, it is hardly accurate to speak of the development of Luther's views on church organization. His basic ideas were there from an early date. They simply were elaborated, with the implicit made explicit, and were put into practice under the shifting exigencies of the historic situation. Always he sought whatever form seemed most likely, in given circumstances, to fulfill the essential function of providing for the free working of God's Word.

The Eschatological Dilemma

By William C. Berkemeyer

IF ONE is straddling a fence, with one foot lightly touching the ground on one side and the other leaning heavily on the other, it is almost impossible to move forward rapidly and confidently. It is not much better if one is trying to tight-rope the top rail. When the church does this in any area, its spiritual progress and effectiveness are greatly retarded. There are many evidences that the church has been trying to do just this in the area of eschatology. The church does not escape eschatological decisions by being indifferent to them. That very indifference often makes for the very inconsistencies which mark our present situation. Evanston was the most recent and evident witness to this.

The single purpose of this study is to bring this eschatological divide into such sharp focus as to make us seek the answer to certain practical questions: Is there any bridge over the divide or, better, any way of filling it up? Must the Lutheran Church and its pastors and theologians make a choice in order to move forward and do its task with greater effectiveness? Or does eschatology not matter?

To this end I want to present the various choices without benefit of quotation in order to avoid the prejudice of names, formulas, and Scripture texts which could be marshaled to give both intellectual and emotional weight to one or the other side of the dilemma. I suppose it will have to become apparent where my own thinking leads, though that is unimportant, and I hope it can be kept peripheral.

I

I trust that it is not necessary to define the term "eschatology." It is hardly possible to attempt a definition without at once begging the question in the sense of putting the emphasis upon one particular interpretation of it. Instead, let us attempt a more inductive approach to this eschatological dilemma.

There are some people who, as soon as a story catches their interest, must know how it turns out. They cannot resist turning to the last pages

and reading the conclusion at once. Why? Is there any reason beyond plain human curiosity? We might begin with the somewhat critical observation that many readers do not seem to realize that, if it is a good story, the important thing is the story itself, the people in it, and the means by which the end is attained, since there is nothing in the end which the characters and happenings of the story did not produce. We might add, too, that readers who must first know the conclusion do not show much confidence in the author. They seem to be afraid that he will play tricks with his characters so that they will not be true to themselves, the good man becoming the rascal and the whole thing ending tragically. It might be countered that one cannot anticipate the end with any assurance because the author may introduce new characters and events which will interfere with the earlier logical ending.

Now, when it is not a story we read but a life-drama in which we play a role, the urgency to know how it comes out is even greater. The reasons for our concern, however, may be similar. Some of us may not believe that the end is going to be the logical outcome of the nature of the characters and their human interplay. Some of us may lack confidence in the power and ability of the good characters to effect a good ending. Some may wonder whether new characters and events may not be introduced to change the direction of the denouement. Some may not even be sure what end the divine Author intends, or whether he can pull it off. Thus we keep searching for an answer. We must know the end, the goal, the conclusion, the final outcome, that which is ultimate both in time and in purpose.

Where shall we find the answer? Obviously, only the divine Author can give it to us. Most Christians believe that God has given an answer, but they are not agreed as to where to look for it or in what form it has been given. This is the eschatological dilemma of Christian theology.

II

There are those who believe that God has given a detailed "apocalypse" or revelation of the "end" in the narrower sense of the word. They believe that God has lifted the veil so that his saints and prophets could see ahead of time when the end will come, what will happen in those last days, the series of cosmic events which will take place, what form judgment and eternal destiny will take. They believe that a careful deciphering and a logical, imaginative fitting together of

the varied Bible pictures will produce the authentic answer, though they may not agree upon the way to fit the puzzle together. Most of those who believe this way gain hope and faith and direction from that composite picture of the "Last Things."

There are others on the opposite side of the eschatological divide. They believe that in the Bible God has not intended to answer the questions of How? When? Where? In what order? but rather to give a simple assurance of what would govern the end. Most of them find this answer not in biblical references to the future but in descriptions of the past, specifically in the "event" of Christ, his person, ministry, message, cross, and resurrection. For them the critical point of God's saving work lies not in the future, not at the end of history, not in the eschatological expectation of Christ's final triumph, but in the past, when through the cross and resurrection Christ fought and won the decisive battle which makes the eventual victory sure. All they know of that future is that it will be controlled by and consistent with this Christ-event of the past. They hold to no fixed idea of how and when it will happen; nor do they think it important or proper to have the veil of the future lifted. When they read the New Testament, just as the cross is the symbol of a unique and significant historical fact of the past, so the varied eschatological pictures and images are symbols, not so much of individual happenings, unknown and unimaginable, as of a stammering language which asserts one fact of faith, the conviction that God's righteous love will be finally victorious and that his children will share in that victory.

They feel that to identify this hope with specific hopes tends to make of God a mere means to an end, which is idolatry. Their only hope is in the divine Author of the play—in his person, his character as revealed in Jesus Christ. Just as their faith is implicit faith, so their hope is radical hope—hope against hope— resting on God's grace alone, and not on any preview of the future. God's love in Christ is the only *eschaton* they know or need to know or ask to know—the only *eschaton* God has given.

They point out how regularly the promises of God in the Old Testament rest alone on God's faithfulness, and also how they find fulfillment in ways that are greater and richer and even different from the understanding of the promise. They claim to stand in the tradition of such words of Jesus as these: "Of that day and that hour no one

knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32); "It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7); "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the son of man. . . . The son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:27, 44). They observe that when Jesus came he was not accepted or recognized as Messiah by his own people because he did not fit any of the popular, traditional patterns, either political or apocalyptic. He did not come in power on the clouds of heaven or in chariots of royalty as the Son of David. They ask whether many Christians are not now adopting the old Jewish ideas of the Messiah and applying them to Christ's second coming, thus repeating the error of the first century, interpreting Christ in terms not of the historic Jesus but of a theoretical future figure.

III

Often the mere circumstances of contemporary life and history swing the pendulum from one form of eschatology to another. When one is young, healthy, and optimistic and the world is peacefully progressive, the latter form of the eschatological hope is most appealing. But when age and pain and catastrophes and evil pressures possess the world, then the futurist eschatological ideas seem more helpful and appealing. It is not accidental that the type of eschatological thinking and apocalyptic pictures which spoke to the condition of the Jews under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes (represented by Daniel in the Old Testament) met the needs of Christians under Nero's heel (Mark's Little Apocalypse) and then Domitian's (Revelation), and that all these biblical pictures meant much to a modern church facing the totalitarianism of Hitler or Communist Russia and China. Obviously, however, these historical circumstances cannot prove the ultimate truth or falsehood of either eschatology.

The same changing world and personal conditions create two other forms of conflicting eschatologies. While almost all Christians believe that God is the author of history, not just in the sense that he has created the universe, but that he continues to provide, sustain, control, and operate his world as he chooses, they do not agree as to the way God works in and for his world.

There are those who, conscious of the sinful depravity of human-

kind and its willful flight from and opposition to the divine Maker, deny that there is any necessary relationship between the actions of men in human history and the time, manner, and nature of the final denouement. They contend that there is no logical, causal relationship here, save perhaps in the acceleration down the slope of human disintegration. When human history comes to its eventual close, it will be because of a powerful, dramatic interference on God's part, a total new act of his, a gigantic upsetting of our child's block world, a kind of atomic explosion, if you wish, which will leave nothing but the pieces which God will then pick up and put together perfectly, as they ought to be.

There are others who believe that God is acting in and through human history and human characters, saints and sinners, the church and the world. While history describes a line that winds up and down hill, there is a permanent, causal, purposive relationship between the total behavior of human beings and the time and manner of the final end. It is God's work. But it does not take place outside of his creation and his creatures. God uses them according to his wisdom, freely and yet within the freedom he has granted them.

IV

Eschatology divides Christendom in other related ways. For those whose eschatology is of the futurist kind, evangelism is important only as a means of gathering men into the ark of the church so that they may be saved when the final deluge comes, and the last judgment. Moral behavior is important only as a kind of personal preparation and practice for the life which is to come. Social action of an ethical kind is of value only as a witness to the community of the kingdom that should be and that will be.

For those on the other side of the eschatological divide, evangelism is important now because it unites men with God, creating a family bond through which God works to recreate both the individual and the world. Christian moral action, on both the individual and the social level, has inherent value, as one of the means which God is causing and using to serve and save others and to bring his world to his desired goal. For them the object of their hope is salvation, in the broadest sense, the full and increasing participation of God's creatures in his grace, in the blessings wrought through the suffering and joy of the Cross, the suffering of God for the salvation of his world.

V

Does this eschatological cleavage, which incidentally cuts across all sorts of traditional theological and ecclesiastical lines, present an absolute alternative? Must you choose one or the other? Is there no bridge between the two, no way of filling the gap? Are we merely muddying the waters of our theological thinking and causing the church to limp painfully if we try to keep a hand or foot on each side of the divide? Do we need to be rigorously logical and see the consequences of these opposite eschatologies? If such a choice is made, will it not produce within Christianity two basic groups? Has that not already happened, even within denominations? Do we not have on one side all those groups, individuals, thinkers for whom faith is right belief, knowledge of God and the future, and on the other side those for whom faith is a radically implicit trust in the God of Jesus Christ? Is there not a tendency for those in the first group to isolate themselves in their worship and church life from the world and to seek to draw others into that isolation, and for those in the second to worship and work as those who would become God's means of recreating not just themselves and those in the fold, but the whole world, human and physical?

When we try to mix these opposite eschatological points of view, as we do, we arrive at a paradox that neutralizes and frustrates. In effect we are saying: "I must! You must! But it doesn't matter, really. For God will make his new world and the citizens of his kingdom with other tools, rather than with us." With this sort of two-steps-forward-and-three-backward, there is little wonder that the church is having less and less influence upon the world and creating confusion within itself, winning not soldiers of Christ but inmates for monastic fortresses and permanent convalescent homes.

It is important, not just for the theologian, but for the pastor, the church administrator, the evangelist, the church councilman to face this eschatological dilemma, for it determines the method, motives, and goals of their daily Christian work. Emil Brunner recently wrote: "The church is faced with the task of so formulating its hope that it does not confront men with the choice: either science or faith. Theology must not neglect one of its principal tasks, to formulate New Testament faith in such terms as to show that it is essentially independent of all

changes in the philosophic conceptions of the universe."[1] We might well paraphrase these words with regard to the eschatological dilemma which faces us, asking, "Must not the church so formulate its hope as not to confront men with the choice: either spiritual retreat or meaningful moral action?"

1 Emil Brunner, *Eternal Hope* (1954), p. 212.

Preaching in the Fall

By Henry Grady Davis

AUTUMN is an ambiguous season, a contradictory season. It brings a year's growth to completion and rest, ripens the fruits we harvest, and at the same time drops the seed for a new year's growth. It is the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness." Earth, "tickled with a hoe, laughs with a harvest." The seed sown, "grows, and spreads, and sows itself anew." Autumn is the season of endings and of new beginnings.

I

In our modern society, the fall of the year brings a sense of beginnings rather than endings. The year of sustained endeavor, both in secular life and in the church, begins with September, stretches through the winter, and ends in June, in spite of the calendar and the Church Year. The pastor who sits down in July or August to plan his preaching from Labor Day to Thanksgiving must surely feel that this diversity of the season is the first thing he has to face.

The proper lessons which will be used in the services are roughly those of the last half of the post-Trinity season. But there are many matters of great importance to the people and the parish for which the lessons are not planned, and of which they take no direct notice. There is Labor Day itself, on which, if anywhere, we can appropriately preach something we too often neglect: the calling and status of the Christian as a worker, a parent, and a citizen. We have not learned how to preach this great evangelical doctrine effectively to our age, and nothing is more needed. It is not too much to say that Labor Day is a secular day and the labor movement a secular movement because both Catholics and Protestants have interpreted the Christian calling too narrowly and ecclesiastically.

In September comes a renewed attention to the church's schools, with rally and promotion. The return of our children to the public schools is an event no less vital to the church. There may be also a Youth Sunday, on which the Gospel should speak not only to Leaguers but to all youth. Furthermore, in September our young people go to

colleges and vocational schools, and surely the Word of God has much to say to them.

October, in some divisions of the church, brings an emphasis on Social Missions. There is perhaps no better time in the whole year to do carefully planned preaching on marriage, preparation for it, and its character as a "holy estate, ordained of God;" and on the Christian relations of races and classes and individuals to God and to one another; and on the evangelization of life—not simply the winning of a few persons into church membership—in the community of Christian love. If these and like matters are not treated now, they will probably not be treated at all, or will be treated sporadically and sketchily in passing.

In November, if not before, comes the budget and its underwriting, with or without an every-member canvass. Unless stewardship is rightly preached, unless there is carefully planned preaching and teaching about it, it will, by the very connections in which it is talked about, and by the weight of sheer suggestion, be reduced to a propaganda for getting money, and its Christian meaning will be lost. But there are other things that come in November too. There is the Christian's political citizenship and its exercise, which is more than the duty to vote in elections. And there is Thanksgiving, not the holiday but the thankful and joyous response of people redeemed, forgiven, and blessed of God. As Harvest becomes less meaningful to urban and suburban people, Thanksgiving should become more meaningful. Thankfulness is at the center of the Christian's life. It is the motive of ethics and service. It is at the heart of stewardship, while the tithe, if seen as a legal requirement or a way of bargaining with God, is in the outer darkness.

Thanksgiving is at the heart of worship too. And if it went out of the liturgy of evangelical believers with the Roman Canon of the Mass, it must not creep back as a eucharistic, sacrificial interpretation of the Holy Communion. Thankfulness must rather gain new strength and clarity at the Offertory, where, with substantial gifts, we offer to God all we have and are, where we present before God not Christ's Body and Blood (that is his offering, not ours, and he is still alive and present to make it for himself), but our own bodies "a living sacrifice . . . , which is [our] spiritual worship."

If the above is felt as a digression, it is a necessary one. The point is that in November comes Thanksgiving. And when shall we rightly preach all these things concerning thankfulness if not at this time?

The subjects I have so far mentioned do not rise from the proper Epistles and Gospels of the autumn Sundays of the Church Year. They do rise insistently from the ongoing life of our people. The pastor who, when planning his fall preaching, looks only at the pericopes is likely to overlook them. They ought not to be overlooked year after year. The question arises whether we can preach on such subjects as these from the proper lessons, and if so, how. The answer is that we probably cannot often do so without indulging in false exegesis. We can, however, do it better than we usually do, as we shall see.

There are other possibilities as well. The reader will notice that I have suggested enough subjects to fill up the quarter almost completely. We should not turn our preaching away from the Church Year for a whole quarter. We can introduce a few of these and like subjects each year, and in three years we shall have covered much important and neglected ground. A better interpretation of the pericopes will reveal some of these subjects in lessons where we had not seen them before. When it does not turn out so happily, we should boldly exercise our Christian liberty and find our chosen themes in other texts. To begin with, there are four other series of lessons in *The Common Service Book,* and more than one in most other Lutheran books.

II

We now turn to this portion of the Church Year, the last half of the Trinity season, which season itself comprises half a year. The long and apparently unbroken succession of Sundays after Trinity constitutes a major hazard of the preacher. Nowhere else is careful advance planning so necessary to secure continuity and integration around vital Christian issues. Nowhere else is there so little to guide the preacher in his attempt to plan. The Gospels appear to be an arbitrary selection of miracles and parables and scattered discourses of Jesus, like a carelessly chosen series of Sunday school lessons. The Epistle is sometimes strikingly related to the Gospel, but often the relation is indistinct or not discoverable. The Introit or Collect sometimes seems more closely related to the lessons for another Sunday than to those with which it occurs. The attempt to pull a given Sunday's propers together into a unity will many times result in an interpretation which, if not false, becomes so broad and general that it loses the particularity and force of every part.

Good planning begins with an honest facing of these facts. Either

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the Trinity season has never been closely integrated, or else it has suffered such dislocations in history that it is now like a reconstructed ancient building that incorporates fragments of still older buildings. The last is true at least to some extent. As Luther D. Reed has shown in *The Lutheran Liturgy,* there are the remains of old series of continuous readings from certain books and groups of books, especially from the Epistles of Paul. But the remains are so fragmentary as not to be much help to the preacher. If any integrated structure of thought about the Christian life is to be presented to our people in the Trinity season, that structure will have to be erected by the preacher.

Some continuity is much needed. What happens too often is that Sunday after Sunday the sermon stands alone, having little or no connection with other sermons or with a total view of Christian faith and life. Religious duties and virtues and attitudes are preached and praised for their own sake, as moral and spiritual ideals that are good in themselves and that commend us to God's favor. Faith is talked about incessantly, of course, but it turns out to be a way of overcoming difficulties and getting what we want. This is done unintentionally and unconsciously. If we merely keep silent about the proper theological connections, the sermon's unspoken implication, which is its most powerful impact, will be one of these: "We ought to . . . ," "We had better . . . or else," "It will pay us to . . . ," "Let us . . . in order that. . . ." (For the last of these typical appeals to self-interest and self-trust, I have to thank George Buttrick.) It is incredible that men who believe in justification by grace through faith can still preach like that, but they do. We are in great danger of doing it in a disconnected treatment of lessons in the Trinity season.

We need, first, a clear view of what the whole season means. That meaning must be vital enough to serve as the general objective of our preaching throughout one entire half of the Church Year, so that every separate lesson and sermon has a proper place within it. We do have this kind of comprehensive view of the winter half, the festival half, "the Lord's half" of the Church Year. That half-year celebrates the history of redemption. We call it the action in history of God in Christ "for us men and for our salvation." Everything Christ did once for all, the Coming, the Incarnation, the Manifestation, the Passion and Death, the Resurrection and Exaltation, the outpouring of God's Spirit—everything comes within the action of God in that redeeming event. Every

proper sermon in that half-year can take its proper place within that action of God.

We do not, I fear, have any such unifying and vitalizing conception of the Trinity season. It has been called the church's half of the year, as compared with the Lord's half. Given an adequate theology of the church, this is true and may be helpful. But the fact is that an adequate working concept of the church is by no means something "given" in our days, even among Lutherans. When the church is thought of only as locally organized groups of people called Christians, who have the Bible and certain common beliefs and practices, or when the church is thought of only as a larger organization representing many such local organizations, then the church is one thing and the Lord another. A half-year belonging to this organization is man's half-year as over against God's half, and, since it gives us nothing distinctively Christian to preach, no wonder it dwindles out into moral, social, institutional, and merely religious propaganda.

More significantly, the Trinity season has been called the Holy Spirit's half of the Church Year. This is the key that can unlock its meaning. However, when we speak of the Holy Spirit, we must mean God's Spirit—that is, God himself, and not the higher and more mysterious faculties and functionings of human personality. We must not mean mere "spirituality." But now, if the Holy Spirit is God, then the Holy Spirit's half of the Church Year also is God's half, the Lord's Christ's half, as all things are his and he is God's. There can be no place in it on any Sunday for the preaching of a merely ethical and moral idealism, or for the preaching of a merely religious expediency.

Let us now try to say it as clearly as we can. The festival half of the Church Year proclaims and celebrates the history of redemption. The Trinity half expresses and nurtures the life of a redeemed people. The festival half describes the action of God in Christ, in his chosen time. The Trinity half describes God's action in our time by the Holy Spirit in Christ, in Christ's body, the reconstituted humanity, the community of Christ's life and love. Everything in the Trinity season, every Gospel and Epistle, every Collect and Introit and Gradual, comes within the action of God; and it either speaks of the action of God in the life of people joined to Christ "in the power of his resurrection" or it speaks through them to mankind outside that fellowship. Every sermon in the Trinity season, to be a proper sermon, must find its place

within the action of God, in the kingdom of his grace or in his judgment of the world.

Only by remembering that we have to do, at all times, with God's action, can we understand what the church is. Nothing less than God's action can be the objective of our preaching throughout the Trinity season. And it is not enough to get some acceptable stated theory, like this or any other, of what the season means. There must be a deep persuasion of it always at the bottom of our hearts, even when we are not consciously thinking about it. We must feel it in our bones. Only then will it control our preaching, as redemption must control our preaching in Advent or at Easter, at Christmas or in Lent.

The Sundays after Trinity do not have to seem like an unbroken succession. My own planning has been helped by the four ancient cycles of the season, which Dr. Reed refers to in Chapter XXVII of *The Lutheran Liturgy*. If we understand the whole season as a description of the dealings of God with that people who, as the Catechism puts it, are redeemed and delivered by Christ, and who "live under him in his kingdom," then we may say that the general theme of the entire season is "Life in the Kingdom of Grace." The theme of the first cycle, Sundays I-V, may be stated as "Called to Life in His Kingdom." The second cycle, Sundays VI-XI, sets forth "The Righteousness of the Kingdom." The third cycle, Sundays XII-XVIII, is on "Living in the Kingdom of Love." The fourth cycle, Sundays XIX-XXVII, can be organized about the theme, "The Consummation of the Kingdom," first in the people who are in it and afterwards in time itself.

The exact limits of these cycles are by no means clearly marked. Some of the lessons do not easily fall into the pattern. No structure of the Trinity season has been supplied by the church. And since in any case a structure must be supplied by the preacher if there is to be one, it is highly important that a sound theological structure be given it. No lesson should be subjected to a warped exegesis to force it into a mold. If we look more deeply into the lesson than we usually look, we shall find that the theological connection is there. If what an honest exegesis finds in a lesson does not fit a theme that ought to be preached, there are plenty of other passages in the Bible which we can use in the pulpit after the proper Epistle and Gospel have been read in the service.

III

It may seem to the reader that we have wandered far from our subject, a preaching program for the fall, but I hope not. Fall is the last half of the Trinity season. Labor Day in 1955 cuts in at the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, which is the second Sunday in the third cycle. The cycle begins on August 28, and ends with October 9. In 1956 it will come in a week later, at the Fourteenth Sunday, the third in the cycle. Every year September begins near the beginning of the third cycle of the Trinity season, for which the suggested theme is "Living in the Kingdom of Love."

Let us lay before us the Gospels for this cycle and see what comes of it. Let us look at each one separately and ask, "What does this passage show about life in the kingdom of Christ's love?" Here is the healing of the stammerer. Good exegesis centers the attention on what Christ did to this man, not on his psychological difficulties, and not on the techniques Jesus used, but on the authoritative command, "Be opened." Here, then, is a man who comes under the action of God's love and has his faculties ordered and his ears opened and his tongue loosed by the love that created them. Can it be that we do not hear what this says to us as we go to school?

Here is the Good Samaritan, or rather the scribe who had to be told about the Good Samaritan. What does Jesus do to this man who has all the answers on the tip of his tongue, whose answers are all right, but who himself is all wrong? The Lord does not give him a further and better answer, nor indulge in pleasant talk about the matter. Christ brings the scribe under the imperative of a love that both makes a man a neighbor and shows him who his neighbor is. Christ brings him there and leaves him there, challenged and unrelieved, which is what the sermon ought to do to the hearers. For this is the most loving thing God can do to the unloving. The only answer to questions about love is the act of loving. And what does this show us about living in the kingdom of Christ's love? What is it saying to us about marriage? What is it saying about race relations and all other human relations?

Let us look at the Epistles for the autumn months. Except for the first of two Epistles for the Twenty-sixth Sunday, they are all from the letters of Paul. Again with one exception, the Eighteenth Sunday, they are all in consecutive order, as in the New Testament.

We must remember that every word of these Epistles is addressed to people living in the kingdom of Christ's love and God's grace. They are not addressed to the ordinary conditions of mankind, but to a redeemed and reconstituted humanity. For these letters are addressed to the church, not to the world. The moral and "spiritual" traits and principles they announce are not a code or a technique which people can use to recreate themselves as spiritual beings. They are the result, the effect created by the action of God's Spirit upon and within Christ's people. Only by the action of God's Spirit can fruits of the Spirit be produced.

There is the long passage from Galatians on the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Sundays. Paul's words are not good religious advice and admonition, but the description of life in the kingdom of Christ's love. He is speaking of people who are Christ's and therefore are led by the Spirit. They are not in moral conflict, but in mortal combat, because the desires of nature are contrary to God's Spirit. This, and not an easy optimism, is the true description of the Christian's life: its ceaseless struggle against sin, its continuous repentance, and its joy in forgiveness and hope. And what has this to say to us in our involvement in the human enterprise, in work, in education, in marriage, in politics, in human relationships? What has this to say to us about stewardship, the management of all our resources and the causes which we support?

And so through the Sundays to the Eighteenth: "rooted and grounded in love," knowing "the love of Christ" by "the power that worketh in us," made "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called," in the "one body and one Spirit" and "the one hope of our calling," coming "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," because "God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord." It is the call to live in the kingdom of his love, and at every point it talks sense about our whole life and all its proper concerns.

But we must stop this. It is a ticklish business anyhow. In the first place, I myself am a preacher and, consequently, am under an almost irresistible temptation to inflict my sermon ideas on you. But I am also a teacher of preachers, and know that the worst possible way to help a man preach is to give him a theme he will take and use instead of finding his own. If I did what I could easily do with all the lessons for the fall quarter, this would be a book instead of an article,

and you might miss the satisfaction of doing it for yourself without undue influence.

Yet I cannot stop without mentioning another feature of the late Trinity season. It is a loss that the propers for the three last Sundays after Trinity are so seldom used. These lessons are peculiar to the Lutheran Church, having been selected by Luther from Veit Dietrich. They look forward to the Second Coming and the Judgment, which subjects are otherwise absent from the Church Year. It is these eschatological subjects that clearly justify the theme "Consummation of the Kingdom" for the fourth Trinity cycle, though other lessons in that cycle are illuminated by the question, "What does this passage have to say to us about the final triumph of God's will for us and in us?"

In planning his fall preaching program, the pastor should take these facts into consideration and decide how he will bring the Trinity season to a fitting close, instead of letting it simply die on the Sunday that happens to be the last. If he cannot do it with the last lesson of the current year, there is no reason why he should not do it with a sermon on another text, and there is no reason why that text should not be from the propers for Sundays XXV-XXVII.

One thing more. Now that the funeral parlor is displacing the church for the burial of the dead, many pastors feel that there is something lacking in the church's ministry at this point. The Order for the Burial of the Dead carries a rubric that authorizes its use in the church after burial. Among Lutherans, in some cultures, there is an old custom of holding, on All Saints' Day or thereabouts, a memorial service for all members who have died during the last year. It would seem in order to arrange a service, not necessarily on a Sunday morning or All Saints' Day, at which the Order for Burial could be beautifully sung, and a sermon preached on death, resurrection, and eternal life. Such a service, and one other sermon on the promised fulfillment of Christian hope by the action of God, would help to bring the Trinity season to a proper close.

And so, my reader, when you sit down in July to plan your preaching for the fall, there will be plenty for you to work with. You will feel the very life of the church surging and throbbing about you. May you be stirred and awed with the knowledge that these are Christ's people, living under the power, the grace, and the love of God. Good luck, and good listening!

Secret Tradition in the Ancient Church

By J. Knudsen

Disciplina arcani is a name given to the practice of secrecy in the early church and it was first coined by Dallaeus in 1666. Interest in and concern for the practice is a by-product of the Reformation. Protestant scholars attacked not only the doctrines of the Roman Church; they also attacked the authority by which Rome proclaimed and substantiated the doctrines. The Catholic claim, ancient and modern, is that tradition is on a par with Scripture as authority for doctrine. When tradition is not obvious through written sources, a secret tradition is claimed, and for this reason the practice of secrecy becomes important. Quite naturally the Protestants were sceptical of this emphasis upon tradition, and they were quick to oppose it in the seventeenth century when the argument came up. They were therefore suspicious also of claims of secrecy by which tradition could be upheld. By and large it must be admitted that the Catholic claims of secrecy were better substantiated than early Protestant denials. On the other hand, the Catholic claims that the practice was instituted by Christ, when he admonished his disciples not to throw that which is holy to the dogs, cannot be conceded by Protestants, and it is proper to say with Heinrich Gravel, the latest historian to treat the subject, that we are concerned with a *practice* of secrecy and not with a *theology* of secrecy. "Christianity knows nothing of secret doctrines, of a secret theology as distinguished from a secret practice."[1]

Recognizing the practice of secrecy but denying the Catholic claim of its origin in the teachings of Jesus and Paul, Protestant scholars have looked for reasons to explain the phenomenon. These reasons have fallen into five categories: (1) A natural desire for privacy. (2) The pressure of persecutions. (3) The development of worship. (4) The rise of the catechumenate. (5) The influence of the mystery religions.

The desire for privacy and the pressure of persecutions are obvious factors which need no elaboration. It was inevitable that the precarious situation of the Christians during the first three centuries should result in an exclusiveness which became more extreme as the danger of confession became greater. The emphasis upon worship was stressed by Theodosius Harnack,[2] who claimed that the problem was liturgical. The growing emphasis upon bishops and clergy found a natural expression in an exclusiveness of the worship which in turn enhanced

1 Heinrich Gravel, *Die Arkandisciplin* (Lingen a/Ems, 1902).

2 Theodosius Harnack, *Der Christliche Gemeindegottesdienst im apostolischen Zeitalter* (Erlangen, 1854).

and underscored the dignity and importance of those officials. The fourth factor, the rise of the catechumenate, is a well-known development which we shall not stress here, although it might well be argued that the practice of secrecy influenced the catechumenate rather than the reverse.

This leaves the problem of the influence of the mystery religions as the undecided issue about which arguments have been offered pro and con. Protestant scholars have, as a whole, maintained that there was such an influence, and Gravel calls this the red thread (*"rote Faden"*) which runs through all their discussion. But there has been a wide difference of opinion concerning the extent of this influence, and particularly has it been maintained that such an influence could not have existed before the middle of the second century when Justin Martyr in his well-known *Apology* openly described the Christian communion service. It has been held that Justin is a *terminus ante quem non,* and the conclusion is that there was no esoteric practice, and therefore no esoteric influence, before that date. It shall be my purpose to investigate this problem. There seems to be a need for such an investigation inasmuch as no authoritative treatment of the subject has been given since Gravel (1902), while research in ancient church history has proceeded apace in the fifty years that have elapsed.

Before we go on to the argument it would be well, however, to document the established practice in the fourth and fifth centuries and to move back from this non-debated period to the period that is under debate. We find the strongest expressions of the practice in the writings of Augustine at the beginning of the fifth century.

> What is it that is hidden and not public in the church? The sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of the Eucharist. For even the pagans see our good deeds; the sacraments, however, are hidden from them, but from these which they do not see grow those which they see.[3]
>
> Receive, my children, the Rule of Faith, which is called the Symbol. And when ye have received it, write it in your heart, and be daily saying it to yourselves; before ye sleep, before ye go forth, arm yourself with your creed (*symbolo*). The creed no man writes so that it can be read, but for rehearsal of it; lest haply forgetfulness obliterate what care hath delivered, let your memory be your record-roll (*codex*).[4]
>
> Hereby I have thus delivered to you, as I should, a brief sermon about the common symbol (*de universo symbolo*), and what you hear in this symbol you recognize in this our sermon briefly collected. Neither may you in any way write so that you may hold the same words of the symbol, but learn by listening; nor write when you have learned; but always hold and review by memory.[5]

Examples could also be given from Ambrose in the west, and contemporaneously we have the following expressions from John Chrysostom in the eastern church.

3 *Ennaratio in Psalmum CIII,* 1:14.
4 *De Symbolo Sermo ad Catechumenos,* 1:1.
5 *Sermo,* 212:2.

Therefore, indeed, it is that both he who is going to ordain calleth at that time for their prayers also, and that they add their votes and assent by acclamations which the initiated know; for it is not lawful before the uninitiated to unbare all things.[6]

For the mysteries we too celebrate with closed doors, and keep out the uninitiated, not for any weakness of which we have convicted our rites, but because the many are yet imperfectly prepared for them.[7]

Let these examples suffice. It is an obvious fact that a practice of secrecy existed in the church of the fourth and fifth centuries according to which the ritual of the sacraments and the formulation of the creed was withheld from non-Christians and only revealed to new members after a period of instruction and probation. *Disciplina arcani* was a reality. The disputed problems concern the origin of the practice, how far back it can be traced, and under what influences it set in. In order to answer these questions we shall go back and start from the beginning.

At the time of Christ and during the first centuries of Christian history the ancient world was filled with the imagery of the salvatory religions. Old national religions had lost their appeal, philosophies had proved to be too intellectualized, and the salvatory promises of mystery religions and philosophizing movements became very popular. Relief from the present world and its woes through knowledge (*gnosis*) or sacramental initiation (*mysterion*) was commonly sought, and the terminology of these sects was widely known. In fact, some of the terms were *termini technici* to the extent that it is a mistake to translate them in any other way than as technical terms. Take, for instance, the word *mysterion*. It was a widely known word which meant the secret knowledge or power which brought salvation. It must therefore never be isolated from its salvatory character, and it is decidedly wrong when Moffatt prides himself that he has translated the word in eleven different ways in the New Testament. *Mysterion* should always be translated "mystery," and the reader of the New Testament should know that it means a *revealed way of salvation.* The same technical character holds for such words as *sophia* (wisdom) and *gnosis* (knowledge), particularly in the New Testament epistles, and it is also true in the same epistles of technical expressions of the mystery religions such as *teleios* (mature, perfect), *photismos* (illuminated), and *katharos* (pure).

There are evidences of these terms and ideas in Judaism, but we shall limit ourselves to the Christian documents. Paul uses the word *mysterion* a dozen times, and although he does not always use it in its sharpest meaning, he never moves outside the limits of its technical character. In some instances he uses it, deliberately and pointedly, in its most special interpretation, a revealed way of salvation. This is true in general of the usages in I Corinthians, but it is even more true of Colossians. There he says (1:25-26) that his office is to make the Word of God fully known, "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made

6 *Homilies on II Corinthians,* 3.
7 *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew,* 23:3.

manifest to his saints." He concedes nothing to the mystery religions, for although he makes use of their well-known terminology, he confesses Christ as the only way of salvation. He adds (v. 27), "To them (i.e. the saints) God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of *this mystery, which is Christ in you,* the hope of glory." This was a language which his age understood, precisely because he used terms which to them were pregnant with meaning. Into these terms he poured the proclamation of Christ as the Saviour, that his listeners might (Col. 2:2, 3) "have all the riches of assured understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom (*sophia*) and knowledge (*gnosis*)." He points this up even more by using the technical description for the beneficiaries of the mysteries, the *teleios,* which means "mature." "Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature (*teleios*) in Christ" (Col. 1:28, 29). He warns, of course, against pagan beliefs. "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ," but he does not hesitate to use their terms and images (cf. Eph. 3:3-4).

His description of how he first came to the Corinthians after his philosophical failure at Athens is a good example of this. "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God (reading *mysterion* and not *martyrion*) in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Yet among the mature (*teleios*) we do impart wisdom (*sophia*), although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But *we impart a wisdom of God in mystery,* hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification (I Cor. 2:1-7; RSV has missed the point here).

The Pastoral Epistles, written a generation or more after Paul, reflect even more an awareness of the terms of the mysteries. The author was conscious of them and he used them deliberately, but he was also consciously on guard against pagan influence. He used the word *mysterion* only twice (I Tim. 3:9, 16), but he used other terms such as *katharos* (pure) and *photizo* (illuminate). He spoke of the grace which God had given in Christ Jesus ages ago, "and which now has been revealed through the epiphany of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who made death inoperative and who *illuminated* life and incorruptibility through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10).[8]

8 One disputed New Testament passage, Mark 4:11-12, may give evidence of an esoteric practice in the church at Rome in the latter part of the first century. See Donald Riddle, "The Evolution of a Gospel Source," in *Journal of Biblical Literature,* June, 1937.

The use of mystery terminology in the Apostolic Fathers is much the same as in the New Testament. Ignatius uses the term *mysterion* a number of times, and also the term *teleios*. One of his examples gives us one of the first references to the Eucharist as a "mystery."[9] The *Didache* has only one reference to "mystery," and it is obscure. "No prophet who has been tried and is genuine, enacting a cosmic mystery of the church" (11:11). In the first ten chapters of the Letter to Diognetus, which form a unit by themselves, the reference is stronger. "But as far as the mystery of the Christian's own religion is concerned, you cannot expect to learn that from man" (4:6). "Nor have they [the Christians] been entrusted with the stewardship of merely human mysteries" (7:1). "Then while your lot is cast on earth, you will realize that God rules in heaven; then you will begin to talk of the mysteries of God" (10:7).

So far we have concerned ourselves only with the use of mystery terminology to express Christian ideas. There is no indication that the use of the terms covered esoteric practices which might have penetrated the church from the same source. We must be careful not to make unwarranted conjectures, of which there are all too many in the story of the ancient church as it is. The only point that can be made in regard to New Testament and early Christian literature in relation to our problem is that there existed a familiarity with the terms and therefore with the practices. If we were to make a further conjecture, it would be that the use of the terms indicates a pressure of the practices against which the authors of the New Testament epistles fought, but even of that conjecture we cannot be sure. And we certainly do not find a justification of secrecy which could indicate that a theology of secrecy existed in the early church.

As mentioned above, the *Apology* of Justin has become a keystone in the discussion of the actual practice of secrecy. The fact that this document in its closing chapters gives an open, and incidentally very significant, description of the ceremonies of Baptism and Communion and of public worship has been taken as evidence that there was no esoteric practice up to that time. Two factors qualify this assertion, however, and make it much less sure than has been supposed. The first is that the socalled "open" description of the sacraments and worship does not include a publication of the sacramental ritual and the creed, the very elements which were kept secret later on. Justin gave a general description of what went on, but he still kept the exact wording of his confession to himself, unlike Hippolytus a half-century later. The second factor is the fact that Justin, in another product of his pen, gives considerable evidence of influence from the esoteric terms of the mystery religions. The fact that the influence comes to him through the medium of Philo does not eliminate it, and we shall consider the matter in more detail.

While Justin's *Apology* was directed against the open and official attacks on

9 Philadelphians, 9:1.

the church, his *Dialogue with Trypho* was directed against other religious and philosophical ideas. Trypho was a Jew, and at first it appears as if the argument was directed against Judaism. E. R. Goodenough has shown, however, that Justin is marshaling both Judaism and Christianity in defense against pagan philosophy. They were the revealed religions, and as such they must be united against the philosophies, for "the entire case for the superiority of revelation to philosophy must stand and fall with a proof that the writings of the Jews and the doctrines of the Christians are a unified production of the single spirit of inspiration and revelation. It is to prove precisely this that Justin writes the Dialogue with Trypho. . . . The Dialogue is Justin's demonstration that revelation, shining brightly from earliest times and glowing with glory in Jesus Christ, is a path to God as luminous and hopeful as the path of philosophy is obscure and depairing."[10]

The constantly recurring theme of the *Dialogue* is the contention that the Old Testament events and prophecies are prototypes or predictions of Christ. This is neither new nor surprising, but our interest is caught by the fact that Justin speaks of this relationship in terms of mysteries. Thirty times he uses the word "mystery," and in only two instances does he refer to pagan mysteries. On more than twenty occasions he refers to Old Testament events, situations, or prophecies as mysteries. A few examples from the *Dialogue* will show how this is done. "The mystery, then, of the lamb which God enjoined to be sacrificed as the passover, was a type of Christ" (40). "Isaiah has explained how that which was spoken by God to David in mystery would take place" (68:6). "And God by Moses shows in another way the force of the mystery of the cross" (91:1). "But you ought to believe Zechariah when he shows in the parable the mystery of Christ and announces it obscurely" (115:1). "(Christ) foretold the mystery of Jacob's wrestling with him who appeared to him" (123:3).

The term "mystery" is thus applied to God's secret purpose which was prophetically revealed in the history of the people of Israel. But Justin goes farther than this in his use of the term. The prophecies must not only be regarded as mysteries; regeneration itself is a mystery. Justin uses the term "the mystery of our own regeneration" (85:7). In one passage he even speaks of the "mystery of salvation," and he identifies this with Christ (74:3). In other passages—seven in all—he speaks of the mystery of the cross, and to these can be added instances where the death of Christ is inferred. Examples will illustrate this. "No one in your nation . . . has died by this mystery, that is by being crucified, save this Jesus alone" (97:4). "He has compassion on all races of believing men, through the mystery of him who was crucified" (106:1). "The despised and shameful mystery of the cross" (131:2). "For Christ, . . . regenerated by himself through water, and faith, and word, containing the mystery of the cross" (138:2).

10 E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena, 1923), 99, 100.

We are rather surprised at this use of terminology by a man who had so strongly opposed the pagan ideas and practices in his *Apology* and who so openly described the Christian practices. It would seem impossible that he should submit to mystery terminology in his subsequent work. But perhaps we can find the explanation in another source. Goodenough has shown that Justin was influenced by a man who was given over to mystery ideas and mystery terminology.[11] He writes: ". . . in point after point we have found the closest similarity between Justin's and Philo's speculations."[12] Goodenough is particularly interested in Justin's acceptance of the Logos doctrine, and he does not take up the mystical ideas in his study of Justin's theology, which was written many years before his later studies of Philo and the mystery religions. On the basis of these later studies it would only be reasonable to conclude, however, that Justin was also influenced by the ideas and terminology which he found in Philo concerning the mystery. It is at any rate a more plausible conjecture that Justin was influenced from this source than to assume that he directly used the ideas and terminology of the pagan cults. In one instance in his earlier writing Goodenough does call attention to the fact that Justin uses the word *photismos* (illuminated) in connection with Baptism, and he agrees with Otto that the term is taken from the mysteries.[13]

The inevitable conclusion from this material seems to be that Justin is not a *terminus ante quem non* for the influence of the mysteries. On the contrary, he makes definite use of their terms, and therefore he is directly in line with the use which we found in New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers. There is yet no suggestion that secrecy was a practice, but the use of the terminology seems unquestioned. References to the actual practice were not far away, however.

Chapter 11 of the "Letter to Diognetus" seems to be from a different source than the rest of the epistle, and it probably stems from the latter part of the century.[14] It hints directly at esoteric practices: "Can any man who has been properly taught, and has come to love the Logos, keep from trying to learn precisely what has been shown openly by the Logos to those to whom he manifestly appeared and spoke in the plainest terms? He remained, indeed, unrecognized by unbelievers, but he gave a full explanation to his disciples who, because he looked upon them as faithful, came to know the mysteries of the father. . . . This is the eternal one, who today is accounted a Son, by whom the church is made rich and grace is multiplied as it unfolds among the saints—the grace that gives understanding, makes mysteries plain, etc." This passage not only speaks of Christ, who manifests mysteries; it describes a fellowship in which the disciples are properly taught and have knowledge of the mysteries but where

11 E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (New Haven, 1940).
12 Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena, 1923), p. 175.
13 *Op. cit.*, p. 257.
14 See *Early Christian Fathers*, edited by Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 210.

the unbelieving perceive not. We no longer have to guess at possible esoteric practices hidden behind more or less vague references to mystery terminology; such practices are openly intimated.

With this statement from the "Letter to Diognetus" we are definitely involved in the catechumenate, and other elements enter into the picture. Persecution is a considered factor, the hierarchy begins to make itself felt (as we shall see in connection with Hippolytus), and the educational demands expressed in the catechumenate build that well-known institution. We must not let our preoccupation with esoteric terminology obscure these factors. Nor must we ignore Irenaeus' blast against secrecy.

> Had the apostles known any secret mysteries, which they taught privately and sub rosa to the perfect, they would surely have entrusted this teaching to the men in whose charge they placed the churches.[15]
> If, then, Luke, who always preached with Paul, . . . learnt nothing different from him, as we have shown, how can those who never were joined to Paul boast that they learned abstruse and unspeakable mysteries (*sacramenta*) from him? Paul shows us clearly that he taught what he knew simply and without reserve, and not only to his companions, but to all who heard him.[16]

But it must be maintained that the catechumenate, whatever other features it had, was definitely esoteric. This is brought out in a statement by Tertullian in which he criticizes the heretics for being too lax in their practices.

> In the first place, it is uncertain who is a catechumen, and who is a baptized believer: they all alike hear, and all alike pray—even heathen if any should have chanced to enter. They will "throw that which is holy to the dogs, and pearls (albeit false ones) to swine." They will have it that their subversion of discipline is simplicity and call our care for discipline affectation. They unite in common union also with everyone from every quarter. . . . Their catechumens are perfected before they are instructed.[17]

The catechumenate was not the cause of the church's esoteric practices. It became the form through which such practices were expressed. It must not be evaluated exclusively according to this feature, but in a discussion of secrecy the esoteric character of the catechumenate will naturally be brought out. The very fact of secrecy during the probationary period is significant, but so also is the use of esoteric terms from the mystery religions, especially the term *teleios* (perfected or mature). The term is used several times in I Clement. It is found in the Ignatian letters and in the *Didache*. We have just quoted it in Tertullian's statement, where he criticizes the heretics for being "perfected" before they are instructed. Even Irenaeus, with his aversion to secrecy and his open criticism of the mysteries, says: "Both the apostles and their disciples taught what the church

15 *Against the Heresies,* III, 3:1.
16 *Op. cit.,* III, 14:1-2.
17 *De Praescriptione Hereticorum,* 41.

preaches, and so teaching, were made perfect, wherefore they were called forth to him who is perfected."[18]

The practice of secrecy seems to be well established in the first half of the third century, although it was probably not general. In *The Apostolic Tradition* which Hippolytus wrote from Rome at the turn of the century we have the statement: "But if there is any other matter which ought to be told, let the bishop impart it secretly to those who are communicated. He shall not tell this to any one but the faithful and only after they have first been communicated."[19] This is where the emphasis upon the hierarchy comes in. After Hippolytus we find Origen arguing against Celsus' second-century claim that the Christian doctrine was secret. He argues that everyone knows the content of Christian preaching, mentioning some of the content of the Apostles' Creed without naming the Creed, but he adds: "But that there should be certain such doctrines following the exoteric which are not made known to the multitudes, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric."[20] Evidence can subsequently be given from Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Caesarea, and finally from John Chrysostum, Ambrose, and Augustine as has been mentioned above.

From this material we shall draw certain conclusions, qualifying them, however, with the consideration that they are personal conjectures, formed on the basis of the source material with as much impartiality as personal opinion will permit. From its very beginning the Christian church was up against esoteric religions whose terms and practices were common knowledge. Paul and other New Testament writers used the esoteric terms freely and deliberately as expressions of the Christian *kerygma,* though never conceding an iota of the uniqueness of the revelation in Christ. The use of the terminology was continued by the post-New Testament writers, and we begin to suspect that esoteric practices were maintained in some of the Christian congregations. Combined with a natural inclination to privacy, with the pressure of persecutions growing stronger in the latter part of the second century, with the growth of the hierarchy, and with the development of the educational institution of the catechumenate, the esoteric practice of withholding truths and information from others than the select grew to be quite common in the final half of the second century. Even Justin's open discussion of the sacraments and worship and Irenaeus' fulmination against it does not disprove the fact that secrecy was an established practice. The fact that it was established in the second half of the century points to an earlier origin and, at least, limited practice. In the third century it became general, and in the fourth century

18 Irenaeus, *op. cit.,* III, 12:13.
19 *The Apostolic Tradition,* edited by Gregory Dix, p. 43.
20 *Contra Celsum,* 1:7.

it was the rule. As persecutions ceased and Christian membership became common and official the practice again faded out.

It might now be asked what significance this feature of ancient life has for Christians of today, other than the interesting description of a pattern of development. Well, it does have significance. First of all, it admits the possibility of an unwritten tradition. This does not necessarily mean that such a tradition was a fact, and it certainly does not mean that there existed a theology of secrecy. It does concede the Roman claim of the possibility of at least a limited unwritten tradition, but it in no way proves the individual items of such a tradition. Secondly, it bears on the argument concerning the content (wording) and development of the Apostles' Creed (the Rule of Faith). It has been commonly maintained that no formulated creed existed in the first three centuries and that the so-called Old Roman Symbol (an artificial term if there ever was one) is the first formulation of the Creed because it is the first formulation which we possess. In view of our argument this contention cannot be upheld. It can, of course, never be proved, barring a sensational discovery, that a formulation existed in the first and second centuries, but if the argument for an early practice of secrecy holds up, then the *argumentum e silentio,* that there was no creed because we do not possess a copy of it, fails also.

The Christian faith is not esoteric. Secrecy does not conform with the teachings of him who sent his disciples into the world to make followers of all people and who taught in ways so simple that even a child could understand his teaching. When the practice of secrecy came into the church, therefore, it came through some development alien to the very spirit of Christianity or through some extraneous influence. Christianity has no cryptic wisdom which is given to the select few so that they can divulge it to the ordinary members through special instruction, and any attempt at exclusiveness must be regarded with suspicion as an attempt to seize and maintain power and influence. Secrecy was a fact in the early centuries, but it was a mistake. We accept the fact, and we can readily understand how the early Christians could, under duress, resort to esoteric practices, but we must not try to exonerate them by attributing to them a worse blunder, namely, that of ascribing to them a theology of secrecy.

A final word of caution. The esoteric practices against which we have argued must not be confused with the natural concern for the intimate and personal character of the Christian faith. A faithful guarding of the faith against misuse and abuse should not be identified with esoteric practice.

The Function of a Theology of Worship

By Joachim Beckmann[1]

THE QUESTION of what liturgics is has received neither a unanimous nor a theologically satisfactory answer in evangelical theology.

1

Prior to the eighteenth century there was hardly such a thing as liturgics as a disciplined concern with the questions of public worship. It is no accident that the theology of the *Aufklärung* was really the first to concern itself with liturgical questions, whereas Orthodoxy quite obviously betrays no real interest in it at all. After the theological and practical decisions with regard to the service of worship were made by the Reformation it was not until the period of the *Aufklärung,* with its enthusiasm for reforms, that the service came to be viewed theologically as the rational Christian society's "worship of God." The Protestant "cultus" was cleansed of its Reformation tradition, which by then had become unintelligible, and the reason given was the improvement of Christian worship in the spirit of a reasonable Christianity. Pietism—apart from Herrnhut—took no part in the discussion of liturgical questions, since the area of the public worship of the church lay outside its purposes. It was not until the great theological change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in connection with Romanticism, that the evangelical church became interested in liturgical questions in any comprehensive and fundamental way. This was the beginning of Protestant liturgics.

This liturgics, of course, was peculiarly embarrassed both with regard to its theological foundation and its method as well as the material that was supposed to come within its province. The evidence for this is easily found in the numerous works on liturgics in the nineteenth century. The most complete of them all, the liturgics of Georg Rietschl, which sums up the results of the century, will serve as an example. (This book has been published in a second edition by Paul Graff fifty years after its first appearance.)[2] This learned work is decidedly weak theologically, strong as it is historically. It contains a tremendous mass of material, but it lacks any fundamental theological consciousness and therefore, despite all that can be learned from it, it is not properly a book on the doctrine of the liturgy. In this respect better attempts will be found in the old Erlangen

1 Translated by John W. Doberstein from an article in *Theologische Literaturzeitung,* Vol. 79, Number 9 (Sept., 1954).

2 Georg Rietschl, *Lehrbuch der Liturgik,* 2 vols., Berlin, 1900 and 1909, ed. by Paul Graff (Göttingen, 1951).

liturgiologists and also in the work of E. Christian Achelis.[3] On the other hand, the liturgical sections of the numerous comprehensive books on practical theology published up to the thirties of this century are extremely brief, particularly with regard to the theological questions involved. What is the reason for this treatment of liturgics?

2

The cause of this uncertainty in Protestant liturgics is to be found in the system of practical theology inaugurated by Schleiermacher and Nitzsch. The idea of this practical theology is based on an autonomous ecclesiology, or, in other words, a philosophical view of Christianity as a religion.

Nineteenth century liturgics thought of itself as a discipline of "practical theology." It has adhered to this idea to this day, as if it were self-evident that liturgics must be subsumed under the idea of practical theology along with homiletics and other disciplines. But this is where we raise two questions. First, we must question the theological rightness of the idea of practical theology in the form set forth so influentially by Schleiermacher. The conception of Christianity that underlies it has been demolished by the work in dogmatics that has been going on since the end of World War I. It therefore becomes necessary to subject to a thorough re-examination the structure of this practical theology which is still determined by a concept of Christianity or the church derived from a philosophy of religion. It would take us too far afield from our theme to discuss this in detail. We must be content here to make it clear that a liturgics which is incorporated in this system is subjected to a premise which right from the start changes its foundation and its purpose. In this system liturgics becomes a theory of the forms of religious expression in Christianity, a description of the cultic forms which the religious life of the church has taken. Then it is no longer a theological discipline, but only a phase of a study of Christian piety or a Christian psychology of religion.

Our second question is this: Is liturgics a sub-discipline of practical theology even if we do not interpret practical theology in the sense intended by Schleiermacher and Nitzsch? It is quite possible that practical theology may discover a new and better theological basis. It is even probable that there can be such a thing as "practical theology" as a discipline of theology. But then the question remains whether liturgics can be simply a component of this practical theology. It cannot be doubted that liturgics has "practical" aspects. But it is not possible to view it as purely practical. It would be disastrous to think of it simply as a set of directions for the practice of liturgical acts. Liturgics is something essentially different, if it is rightly understood. If it is the doctrine of the worship of the church

3 E. Christian Achelis, *Lehrbuch der Praktischen Theologie,* 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1911).

—and dare it be anything less than that?—then its function is that of a genuine theological discipline, just as surely as the worship of the church belongs not in a marginal area but rather in the center of her life.

3

This uncertainty in liturgics can be overcome only by a clarification of its theological foundations, and this is urgently needed in evangelical theology.

Evangelical theology has for too long concerned itself only marginally with the theological implications of liturgical questions. It has been taken for granted that the implications of theology for the liturgy were obvious. Even in practical theology liturgics has usually been treated as incidental. There have been seminars in homiletics and catechetics but not in liturgics. Almost never have there been lectures on liturgics as a major discipline. And in the area of liturgical research evangelical theology has hardly been represented at all. Only in very recent times have changes begun to emerge. In church history Lietzmann[4] was a pioneer. He devoted a great part of his researches to the worship of the church. In New Testament scholarship attention was directed to the liturgical elements by Lohmeyer,[5] Cullmann,[6] and Delling.[7] Dogmaticians, too, have turned to the discussion of liturgical questions, among them Karl Barth,[8] Paul Althaus,[9] and Peter Brunner.[10] The first "practical theologian" to draft a liturgics based on a new theological orientation was Hans Asmussen.[11] Add to this the liturgical writings of Wilhelm Stählin, which are available in many essays and brochures.[12] More recently, Peter Brunner, a dogmatician, has made the first comprehensive contribution of evangelical theology to the doctrine of the liturgy in his essay "On the Doctrine of the Liturgy of the Congregation Assembled in the Name of Jesus Christ" in *Leiturgia.*[13] The monograph by Vilmos Vajta, a Hungarian disciple of the Lund theology, *Luthers Theologie des Gottesdienstes,*[14] Wilhelm Hahn's

4 For example, Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche,* 4 vols. (Berlin, 1937 ff.); *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Bonn, 1926).

5 Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kultus und Evangelium* (Göttingen, 1942).

6 Oscar Cullmann, *Unchristentum und Gottesdienst* (Zürich, 1950).

7 Gerhard Delling, *Der Gottesdienst im Neuen Testament* (Berlin, 1952).

8 Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (Zollikon, 1932 ff.), for example, I, 2, pp. 229-261; 406-504; etc.

9 Paul Althaus, *"Der Sinn der Liturgie,"* in *Luthertum,* Vol. 47, 1936.

10 Peter Brunner, *Die Ordnung des Gottesdienstes an Sonn- und Feiertagen* (Gütersloh, 1949).

11 Hans Asmussen, *Die Lehre vom Gottesdienst* (München, 1937).

12 For example, *"Evangelische Jahresbriefe"* (five articles on the German mass). *Um was geht es bei der liturg. Erneuerung* (Kassel, 1950)? "Liturgische Erneuerung als ökum. Frage und Aufgabe," in *Zeichen der Zeit,* Nos. 3-5.

13 *Leiturgia, Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes,* ed. by K. F. Müller und W. Blankenburg (Kassel, 1952).

14 Lund, 1952.

Gottesdienst und Opfer Christi,[15] and K. F. Müller's *"Die Neuordnung des Gottesdienstes in Theologie und Kirche,"*[16] should also be mentioned.

These references may be sufficient to show that the need for thorough-going theological thinking on the questions of liturgy is being recognized. A beginning has been made which can lead to liturgics becoming a proper discipline in evangelical theology. Only a dogmatic clarification of its foundations can overcome the uncertainty and embarrassment that have hitherto characterized liturgics. Vajta's fine book on Luther's theology of the liturgy indicates the main theological questions which are involved in an evangelical liturgics. Moreover, the situation created for evangelical theology and the evangelical church by the ecumenical movement[17] makes it imperative that we make our contribution to the ecumenical discussion of the worship of the Christian church instead of standing by in uncertainty because we have not taken the trouble to give adequate theological clarification to one of the most important of all the ecumenical questions which involve the unity of the church.

The foundations of liturgics cannot be laid within the framework of practical theology, however it may be constructed, but neither can it be based upon an ecclesiology, since the subject matter of liturgics cannot be derived from ecclesiology.

We have already raised the question whether liturgics can have its basis within the framework of practical theology. The subject matter of liturgics can no more be classified with practical theology than can, say, church polity. Its function is not primarily "practical," but rather "theoretical," that is, dogmatic. This would be scanted in the framework of a practical theology, unless one were to create an entirely new concept of practical theology. But even then it would be questionable whether the doctrine of the liturgy does not rather require a place in the total plan of theology—like ethics, for example, which in a sense is also a kind of "practical" theology.

Then it may occur to some that liturgics might be based on an ecclesiology.[18] After all, it is concerned with the worship of the church. There can be no doubt that the service of worship is an act of the church, the church in action. But this is precisely where we must ask what is the relation between the church and the service of worship. There is in our time a strong tendency in the direction of reconstituting evangelical theology in the area of ecclesiology. For a long time theological discussion has centered essentially upon the question of the church,

15 *Eine Untersuchung über das Heilsgeschehen im Gottesdienst* (Göttingen, 1951).

16 In *Theologie und Liturgie,* ed. by L. Hennig (Kassel, 1952).

17 Cf. the discussion prepared for the world conference in Lund, 1952, *Ways of Worship, The Report of a Theological Commission of Faith and Order* (London, 1952).

18 For example, E. Pfennigsdorf, *Praktische Theologie,* 2 vols. (Gütersloh, 1930); M. Schian, *Grundriss der Praktischen Theologie* (Giessen, 1922).

especially since this question has been put in the foreground by the ecumenical movement. Besides, questions of the church are playing an outstanding role everywhere in Christendom, especially in Germany. Nevertheless, we ought to be warned against a development of theology as ecclesiology, but most certainly against tying liturgics to this sphere. The result would be simply a new statement of the view of Schleiermacher. But if the church is, as Luther phrased it, a "creation of the Word" (*creatura verbi*) and nothing but a creation of the Word, not even in the sense of being a creation of the Word besides being a sociological product, then certainly the worship of the church must be understood, not as a creation of the church, but as a creation of the Word. If it is certain that it is the worship of the church, then it is just as certain that it is not primarily the worship that the church creates, but rather the worship that creates, upholds, and sustains the church—*creatura verbi*. Therefore, to make the doctrine of the liturgy a part of the doctrine of the church or to derive it from it cannot be made to accord with the fundamental Reformation understanding of the church and the Word of God.

The foundation of liturgics dare not be keyed to ecclesiology any more than can ethics or church polity. Otherwise the likelihood would be that we should find ourselves moving on lines that characterize the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. And what would come of it could, according to Karl Barth, be only a bad copy of the Roman system.

5

The foundation of liturgics must consist in a theology of the service which is a development of the theology of the Word, for the doctrine of the liturgy is a function of dogmatics just as is ethics. Both are fundamental constituents of dogmatic theology.

If we are right in starting with the assumption that liturgics is first of all the doctrine of the liturgy, it follows that the foundation for it must be laid in a dogmatic consideration of the concept of worship. One might call this also the theology of the liturgy. No less a theologian than Karl Barth has presented something like a theology of worship in his book on the Scottish Confession, "The Knowledge of God and the Worship of God according to Reformed Doctrine,"[19] and also in frequent references in his dogmatics. There is also a dogmatic discussion of the liturgy in a section of Asmussen's "The Doctrine of the Liturgy." In both it is evident that the theology of the liturgy is indeed a development of the doctrine of the Word of God. The same applies to Peter Brunner's extensive contribution already mentioned. Here the right theological starting point has been achieved, and the doctrine of Christian worship is determined by the conception of the Word of God. Only there can an evangelical liturgics find its standards,

19 *Gotteserkenntnis und Gottesdienst nach reformierter Lehre*, 1938.

just as evangelical ethics must start there. Like ethics, liturgics, too, is a part of dogmatic theology. It could, insofar as it is a theology of worship, be included in dogmatics. But, as in the case of ethics, it may prove right—Karl Barth to the contrary—to make it relatively independent of dogmatics, especially since liturgics may consist not only of the theology of the liturgy, but also includes in its essential field of work historical and practical elements without which it would be incomplete. Liturgics stands alongside of ethics. Both are to be understood as theological disciplines founded upon dogmatics. It should at least be noted that there can be no thought of deriving liturgics from ethics. But a theology of the liturgy will have to make it clear that the evangelical concept of the service of worship will not allow a separation of "cultus" from "ethos," and yet that it is impossible that the Christian service of God be merely identified with ethical obedience.

6

Only a dogmatic reflection which is centrally Christological will lead to a legitimate doctrine of the liturgy, which is the chief part of liturgics.

Hitherto liturgics has suffered from the fact that it has neglected to lay a theological foundation or treated it too lightly. Thus the impression was given that the main constituent of liturgics is a history of the liturgy and that the history of the liturgy itself would provide the standard for the treatment and solution of practical liturgical questions. But then liturgics became more a subdivision of comparative symbolics, understood as a description of the various kinds of services in the Christian churches. From these it was only a step to liturgics as a part of the phenomenology of religion or the psychology of religion, as, for example, in Niebergall.[20] Naturally, the Christian service of worship as a religious phenomenon can be made the subject of the scientific study of religion. But this method will not show us its essential nature any more than one can see the Gospel or the church from the point of view of a philosophy of religion.

Liturgics must not allow itself to be made into an empirical, descriptive science. It must not be oriented upon the psychology of religion or anthropology, if it is to be, what in truth it is, a theological discipline. But since the Christian service of worship can be understood only theologically, then a doctrine of the Christian service of worship can also grow only out of dogmatic theology. And what will be determinative here is that this dogmatic theological thinking be centrally Christological. And here, too, the possibility, which very easily suggests itself, of thinking of the church's worship as the particular Christian manifestation of the universally human worship of God must be sternly resisted. It is revealing to see in textbooks of Roman Catholic liturgics how they begin theologically with a general concept of worship, and unfortunately, many evangelical liturgiologists

20 Friedrich Niebergall, *Praktische Theologie,* Vol. II (Tübingen, 1919).

have followed them in this respect. This is precisely the point, however, where under no circumstances can we operate with natural theology, if we are not to make a right understanding of Christian worship impossible from the very start. It is by no means accidental that in the New Testament acts of worship are not described in terms of ideas taken from the worship life of the Jews and pagans. Christian worship can be expounded only in relation to Christ; that is, its foundation must be Christological. Christian worship is founded exclusively upon the Christ-event and therefore it is fundamentally different from all human worship of God. Because this is so, liturgics has a legitimate place as the theological doctrine of Christian worship.

7

The function of liturgics as the theological doctrine of Christian worship is not to devise and construct the Christian liturgy, but rather to determine the dogmatic place of the service, to set forth its essential nature on the basis of the apostolic witness, and to present the principles which should govern the forms of worship.

Liturgics dare not think of its task as being that of giving an analysis of the Christian liturgy on the basis of the *historical* materials and thus achieving a synthesis. Nor must we expect of liturgics that it see as the goal of its theological endeavor the construction of the correct Christian service of worship, as it were, the *ideal form* of worship achieved through theology. This has, of course, been attempted again and again in various quarters. This would seem to me, however, to be a misunderstanding of its theological task which rests upon a misunderstanding of Christian worship. By its very nature the Christian service of worship does not come into being as a theological construction of experts, but is rather that which occurs in the history of the church as a meeting of the Lord, acting in Word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit, with his church, the liturgical form of which is the product of the faith and obedience of Christendom.

It is no accident that in the New Testament we find no definite, normative "original form" of worship, no "sacred liturgy!"

It is not the task of liturgics to supply this lack. Not even the Roman mass can be misconstrued as the product of theological construction. It, too, is something that grew in the long history of the church. The only task of liturgics as the doctrine of the liturgy is theological reflection upon the liturgy. As such its first task is to define the dogmatic place of the liturgy and thus clarify the question of the relationship between the Christian service of worship as an event in the church and the saving event in Christ and the appropriation of salvation. Further, its task, above all, is to search the Scriptures, that is, the apostolic witness, and gain from them the answer to what is the essence of the Christian service of worship, in which task it should naturally take into account also the witness of the

church in its confessions. This opens up a profusion of questions that require a theological answer, beginning with the fundamental question of the *saving event* in the worship of the church, so impressively treated by Peter Brunner—the understanding of it as God's service to the congregation in the administration of the means of grace as well as the congregation's service to God in prayer and praise, in which connection especially the question of the relation between the service of worship and the sacrifice of Christ has again been revived. But the church year, with its Sundays and festivals, and music and art in the service also set tasks which need to be thought through theologically. This also enjoins upon liturgics the task of coming to terms with the conception of the service of worship and the forms it takes in various Christian confessions. By carrying out these tasks a theology of the liturgy can finally arrive at the point of setting up definite principles or guide lines for the right form of worship in the church.

8

The theology of the liturgy provides the critical canon by which to test and judge the Christian service of worship in its historical form. Its function with regard to the liturgy is critical, not creative and constructive. It shows practical liturgics, which give directions for the right disposition and conduct of services, the ways in which the church may employ the service of worship.

Just as theology as a whole has an essentially critical function in the church, so liturgics as a theological discipline also performs a critical function. We have already pointed out that it cannot be the function of liturgics to create the liturgy for the church. This does not mean that a liturgiologist may not participate in a reform of the liturgy when this is deemed necessary in a church. Indeed, in some circumstances it is part of his task as a theologian to press for a needed reform of the liturgy and make it his concern that the tradition of the church shall not be looked upon as sacrosanct and inviolable. But his real task as a scientific theologian is, like that of the dogmatician, to test the doctrine and preaching of the church by the Scriptures, to examine and to judge theologically the worship of the church in its historical form, as it appears in the liturgics of the church, in the light of what he learns from the apostolic testimony of the Scriptures as the doctrine of worship. Here, too, is the only place where we can work out theologically the critical canon which will make it possible to define our position with regard to the history of the liturgy and its results. And the history of the liturgy presents us with a whole series of fundamental theological questions, the discussion of which we dare not leave to the Anglicans and Benedictines. Only when it has done this can liturgics undertake a genuine *practical*-theological task, which, to be sure, is also in its province and which is certainly to be looked upon as the goal of this work.

The worshiping church of the present needs not only a right understanding of what it is actually doing when it holds services; it also needs help and counsel and direction in so conducting and so fashioning these services—and this is its task when it responsibly undertakes the ministry of Word and sacrament—that through the Word and sacrament they may be "worship in spirit and in truth."

The Use and Abuse of Symbols

By L. David Miller

FOR CENTURIES symbols have been an important accompaniment of religion. Man's deepest instincts respond to symbols and ceremonies in worship. Kenneth Burke has said that man is "specifically the symbol-using animal." Even language itself is symbolic. A mere word symbolizes or stands for an idea or an experience. The word "prayer" does not itself resemble communion with God, but that word is the recognized symbol for the state of meditation with God.

The ministry of symbolism is a silent testimony, making use of outward signs that have an inner meaning. Dr. Fleming writes in his book, *Christian Symbols in a World Community,* "A symbol means something presented to the senses that stands for and reminds us of something else. It is an outward and visible sign of an inner and spiritual reality. A Chinese was asked why he attached a cross to his watch chain. He replied, 'I like to put my hand in my pocket and be reminded of a great sacrifice.' An altar candle to some may be merely a source of light, but a congregation might learn to say with Abbie Graham, 'As I watch the Christmas candles burn I see in them a symbol of great love which dipped a lustrous spirit into a human form that the world in its darkness might be illumined and made beautiful.' "

The importance of the ministry of symbolism is reflected in the Bible. Jesus used symbols and figures of speech in order to make his teaching rich in meaning. Everyone is familiar with the following symbols which he used: the pearl of great price, the lost and wandering sheep, the working leaven, the house founded upon a rock, the sower of the seed, the laborers in the vineyard, the unjust steward, and the prodigal son. These stories taught invisible, spiritual meanings.

Ancient symbols used in churches today express the religious continuity of the present with the past. Our church architecture is rich in symbolism that stems from former years, reminding us of the unbroken stream of Christian life that flows down through the centuries.

In the early church symbols became a secret code to convey messages to other Christians who wished to disguise their connection with the group to avoid persecution. Thus the fish became a symbol for the Saviour because the Greek word for fish is an acrostic from the Greek phrase meaning "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour."

Our use of symbols today serves a different purpose. No longer do Christians need to conceal their relationship with the Communion of Saints by a skillful use of symbols. Now the ministry of symbolism serves an educational function in keep-

ing with the most modern teaching techniques. We are living in an age of visual aids. Television, moving pictures, and film strips as well as maps, pictures, and carvings are accepted teaching aids. They are used also in religious education. Symbols in church buildings are concrete aids to assist the worshiper to consider abstract ideas. We need these art forms to be signposts along the way to invite worshipers to think on spiritual things. Only the exceptionally mature and disciplined person could engage in worship without the help of parables, ceremonies, and symbols.

However, art forms alone cannot accomplish worship. They are meant merely to begin the process. Their success or failure depends upon the effort of the worshiper. Prayerful thought must accompany visual attention. The person who benefits from a sermon does more than just listen to the words or watch the dramatic effects of a preacher. Spiritual help comes when the heart and the mind are joined with the eyes and ears. Religious symbols become aids to worship when the whole person responds not to their aesthetic appeal but to their underlying meaning. To attach too much significance to a tangible object may result in idolatry. Some backward people may even attach magical significance to symbols. The danger of symbols becoming a fetish is a problem that foreign missionaries occasionally encounter. In our own land, overfamiliarity detracts from the spirit and message of symbols. Periodic education as to the purpose of symbols in worship will guard against a mere aesthetic appreciation and will result in a more intelligent and enriching worship experience.

The ministry of symbolism may lose its effectiveness also by over-emphasis. The Hollywood influence is reflected in churches where symbolism is sometimes dramatized for its own sake. Carving and painting symbols at random on every available two-by-four degrades them to mere decoration. Frequently the selection of symbols is left to the judgment of people better qualified for laying cement than for making appropriate decisions in matters of propriety. There is a church in which a baptismal font was decorated with symbols of the passion of Christ instead of symbols applying to Baptism. Another church made garish use of symbols until the church looked like the boardwalk at Coney Island. The decorator created some designs that looked more like a milk bottle than anything with Christian associations.

Symbolism is robbed of meaning by indiscriminate use. It is well to remember that in early Christian art symbolism was not so lavish as is generally supposed. It was never used merely as decoration, but as a necessary means of communicating spiritual truth to believers and concealing it from enemies. In later years, when elaborate houses of worship were built with ornate sculpture and stained glass windows, symbols were used to identify biblical characters because few of the worshipers could read. Certain signs were used to distinguish one from the other. Thus it became customary to identify our Lord by means of a nimbus, a circle

around his head. From this circle emanated four rays forming a cross. Mary was given a nimbus with stars adorning its border, and her figure was usually garbed in light blue. Moses held two tablets of stone. Noah held a model of the ark. St. John was shown with an eagle at his feet. St. Peter usually carried two keys. Each of the other apostles was given an appropriate identification. Doctrinal teachings also were taught by symbols: The Trinity by an equilateral triangle, Baptism by a fountain, Holy Communion by grapes, Redemption by the Cross, God by the hand and the all-seeing eye, Christ by various monograms including XP and IHS, the Holy Spirit by tongues of fire, and many others.

Such symbols should be used appropriately and with restraint. Lutherans do not condemn art forms and make a virtue of bleak, prosaic severity. Martin Luther retained symbolism, but he warned against excess, distortion of meaning, and over-emphasis on secondary matters.

There is value in continuing meaningful symbols and customs that originated centuries ago. However, some customs cling like parasites even though they may be out-worn and out-grown, or stand for ideas that are no longer true to our beliefs today. An antiquarian approach which places a halo about anything that is old should be avoided. We need to be firmly grounded in the past, but we need also to be discriminating and creative. We need consecrated Christians who, like Luther, can evaluate the past, introduce new customs, and create new symbols that represent contemporary thought and life.

A Basis for Intellectual Freedom

By George C. Reese

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM has become the serious concern of colleges throughout the United States. Because intellectual freedom has been threatened by irresponsible accusations and undesirable pressures, colleges have been seeking ways to meet these threats. Among church-related colleges faculty discussions groups have been created to consider ways of conserving and continuing our heritage of freedom. To stimulate these discussions the National Council of Churches has selected three faculty members to travel among the church colleges. Typical discussions have dealt with the nature of freedom and its historical, cultural, and religious foundations. It is not inappropriate, therefore, that Lutheran colleges seek direction from their heritage in order to undergird their intellectual freedom.

It should be helpful to look at the principle of justification by faith to discover its implications for intellectual freedom. There appear to be at least four implications in this historic principle. (1) The ground of Christian faith is absolute truth. For the Christian this absolute truth is identified as God and his self-disclosure in Christ. (2) Yet man is always plagued by a large measure of ignorance of complete truth. He is justified not by his knowledge of the truth but only by his faith in the truth. This means that (3) he cannot claim any justification before God for any achievement in the realm of knowledge. (4) Yet because he is justified by his faith in the truth, his response of gratitude will lead him to encourage an atmosphere of intellectual liberty in which he and others can seek truth as much as possible.

In the first place, then, life in a Christian college is characterized at the very least by belief in truth as absolute and not relative. Truth is eternal and therefore not subject to the conditions of time or place. Its unconditioned character places it beyond the destructive forces of a natural world. Yet truth not only transcends the processes of nature and history but is also revealed in nature and history by God's creative hand and his redemptive work in Christ. God, at once beyond and revealed, is the truth. This the Christian knows by faith.

By faith the Christian knows who God is and what he does. But this knowledge is not complete; it is partial. The Christian knows in part and prophesies in part; he sees through a glass darkly. He can only be accepted by God through faith, i.e., because he believes that God forgives his ignorance and accepts him despite his ignorance.

"The principle of justification through faith," writes Paul Tillich, "refers not only to the religious-ethical but also to the religious-intellectual life." Not only he

who is in sin but he who is in ignorance is justified by faith. Ignorance need not separate us from God. He forgives our ignorance, and we receive his forgiveness through faith.

Since knowledge is not needed for justification, the teacher and the student are free to go about their business and search for whatever truth they can. But they will always admit the fallible and finite character of whatever truth they discover. They will realize, as Reinhold Niebuhr points out, that "It is impossible to accept *our truth* as *the truth.*" Therefore, the teacher and student will seek to discover and express truth as best they can with free and open minds and they will encourage all others in a similar search.

It is precisely this humble questing spirit which distinguishes the Lutheran mind from the Roman Catholic attitude toward truth. The Catholic has a relatively high confidence in his power to discover the truth. He believes that the natural world reveals supernatural truth. This confidence in the power of human reason to discover the truth in the natural order is exhibited by the words of Fulton Sheen: "Freedom is the right to do what you ought, and ought implies purpose and law. We are free in the law and not outside of it. We are most free when we obey the nature of things and not when we disobey them."

By reason and natural law, then, the Catholic can know the truth. Such confidence in the power of man to know the truth is evidenced by Professor Daniel Sullivan of St. John's University in Brooklyn when he writes, "In the realm of education one must label one's wares. Is what is being presented truth, or is it opinion, or probable opinion, or is it error?" These words suggest that man is able to distinguish clearly between truth and error. They do not acknowledge the prevalence of man's ignorance. They also explain why the Catholic, unlike the Lutheran, will be interested in restricting intellectual freedom. The Catholic claims to know the truth in a way that the Lutheran does not. The Lutheran, on the other hand, acknowledges his ignorance and desires the free expression of ideas in order that his partial grasp of truth may grow. The Protestant, justified by God's grace through faith and lacking Catholic confidence in reason and nature, is free to encourage intellectual freedom wherever it expresses itself.

Clearly implied in the Reformation principle of justification by faith is the claim that no achievement in the realm of knowledge will gain God's acceptance for man. Just as Luther criticized the claim of good works, so we might object to any pretentiousness in the realm of human knowledge. When Luther says, "Faith alone, without works, justifies, makes free, and saves," we may say, "Faith alone, without knowledge, justifies, makes free, and saves." When he writes of the "Christian liberty, even our faith, which makes the law and works unnecessary," we may speak of the liberty and faith which make the law and knowledge unnecessary. That is the promise of Jesus when he says, "If you continue in my

word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Because intellectual achievement is not necessary for the Christian's salvation and because it is always diluted with ignorance, the Christian ought not to be guilty of the fanaticism which so often threatens the intellectual search. Christian teachers will be cautious in their claims and eager to encourage intellectual freedom. They will not abuse their freedom by any claim to possess absolute truth.

But one might well ask whether there is not a danger in following the Reformation principle? If our knowledge is so ambiguous that we cannot with complete certainty distinguish between fact and falsehood, is there not the danger that our search will degenerate into scepticism?

Perhaps. But scepticism can hardly be the path of a man who is led by faith in the truth. He cannot forget that he can gain some truth, partial though it may be. Although he cannot comprehend truth, nevertheless he can apprehend it. And that is his task: to widen his apprehension of the truth by encouraging freedom of opinion and freedom of expression.

Indeed, the Reformation principle implies such a task. The Christian who is justified by faith and freed by faith will seek to express his faith creatively. Just as Luther could say that "good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works," so the Lutheran teacher may well say that "knowledge does not make a Christian teacher, but a Christian teacher will encourage the spread of knowledge." This means that he will encourage the creative search for truth. He will furthermore encourage a free environment for the search.

This does not mean that any teacher is free to teach anything. But it does mean that the community of learners in fostering its freedom can brook no interference from outside. Rather must it make its own corrections of apparent errors. Only the academic community is qualified to judge its own approximations of the truth. Consequently it must resist outside pressure.

How then shall the academic community purge itself of abusive teachers. Perhaps Alfred North Whitehead has the answer when he writes, "In the teaching profession it is obvious that young students cannot be subjected to the vagaries of individual teachers. In this sense, the claim for the freedom of teaching is nonsense. But the general community is very incompetent to determine either the subject matter to be taught or the permissible divergences to be allowed, or the individual competence. There can be only one appeal, and this is to general professional opinion as exhibited in the practice of accredited institutions. The appeal is catholic."

How this general professional opinion can be used is exemplified by an incident which occurred in 1950. In April of that year Macmillan published a book by Immanual Velikovsky entitled *Worlds in Collision.* The book encountered objections from a professional opinion that was practically unanimous. So great

was the criticism against the book that Macmillan gave up its publishing rights in less than three months after the publication date despite the fact that it had already sold 55,000 copies.

Such a general professional opinion appears to be the solution for the academic community in preventing intellectual liberty from degenerating into license. And only by relying upon such a correction from within can it preserve its freedom from the oppressive influence of outside forces.

Life and Thought in World Lutheranism

The Church and German Unity

Ten years after the shooting war ended in Europe, developments in Germany are charged with new explosives. Events in the former European Theatre of Operations now demand dramatic decisions of wide international consequence. The "defeated people," as Germans referred to themselves, are a key people on whose condition—divided or united—depend basic issues of peace and partnership among nations waging cold war and dreading, yet courting, hot war.

With Germany's Protestants, mostly Lutheran, half to the East and half to the West of the Curtain, churchmen have for a decade spoken for peace and for a reunited nation. Roman Catholics, in an almost 50-50 ratio to Protestants only in the West, have worked with ardor for the integration of Chancellor Adenauer's government into NATO and other western relationships. Protestants, however, have been divided, particularly on the issue of German rearmament. They have also been possibly more sensitive to the irony of a decade of reversals in major international policy, and more profoundly troubled over the unsolved dilemma of German bisection.

Not unmindful of the attainment of a peace treaty for Austria, the two major synodical conventions of 1955, that of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in the Westphalian refugee town of Espelkamp, and that of the United Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) in the Red Zone city of Weimar, sent special messages to their congregations as well as to government authorities, urging peace and German unity. (Portions of the text of these messages are given below.) As spokesman for unity, the church since 1945 has been the most important organization in German life with relative freedom of access to both sides of the Curtain. Thanks largely to its record under Nazism, the occupying powers accepted the premise that the church is not to be separated by politically drawn boundaries. This has been an encouragement to church unity as such, and the postwar rise of the EKD and VELKD are cases in point. More than usual significance thus attaches to the synodical conventions of these two closely interrelated general church bodies, whose places of meeting have as nearly as possible alternated between East and West.

Meeting March 6-11 under the general theme of "The Church and the World of Labor," the EKD synod focused attention on the mission of the church in contemporary society and endeavored to deal realistically with issues of Christian social responsibility. The kind and manner of partnership among the several churches in carrying forward their social and spiritual tasks was a prime concern. In reviewing the first six years (synodical delegates are elected for a term of six years), Bishop Otto Dibelius, chairman of the Council of the EKD, minced

no words. He acknowledged difficulties but also advantages that had sprung from the creation of a separate Lutheran organization (VELKD) within the larger EKD. The cooperation, he said, of the explicitly Lutheran members had been loyal, dependable, and the fears of those with forebodings to the contrary had proved groundless. In short, the reality of Christian fellowship and dedication to purpose is stronger among the churches today than in the 1920's, he asserted. The election of synodical officers subsequently tested this fellowship when Professor Konstantin von Dietze, of Freiburg, was elected lay president in place of Dr. Gustav Heinemann. The latter had served ably as president for the first six years, but some regarded his politics as a liability, while others, like Martin Niemöller, stoutly defended him. In the newly elected Council of the EKD, Bishop Dibelius continues as chairman, Bishop Lilje as vice-chairman. On the twelve-man Council six are from churches in the VELKD, five from Union churches, and one Reformed. For the Lutherans the major change was the replacement of veteran Bishop Meiser by Oberkirchenrat Riedl of Munich. (Source: *Evangelische Welt,* 1955, pp. 148-149, 145-147, 150-151, 155-156.)

Bishop Hans Meiser and Lutheran Unity

When Dr. Hans Meiser retired on May 1, 1955, as bishop of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria, one of the most effective workers for Lutheran unity passed his duties on to younger men. Successor to the 74-year-old bishop in Bavaria is able young Dr. Hermann Dietzfelbinger, former rector of the big Deaconess Institution at Neuendettelsau. His successor as presiding bishop of the United Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD)—elected by its General Synod, meeting April 23-27 at Weimar—is dynamic and still youngish Dr. Hanns Lilje, bishop of Hanover and president of the Lutheran World Federation. A native of Nürnberg, Meiser's ministry included a World War I chaplaincy, management of a big Inner Mission agency, planning and heading the first Bavarian practical seminary for pastors, apprenticeship in the Munich headquarters of the Bavarian Lutheran Church. His twenty-two years as bishop span prolonged periods of storm and stress, calling forth excellent abilities and strengthening his commitment to a united Lutheran witness at home and abroad.

Hans Meiser's active interest in world Lutheranism began with a book. In 1928, as the veteran historian Dr. Paul Fleisch reports, Meiser prepared the data on Bavaria which were later embodied in Jørgensen, Fleisch, Wentz, *Lutheran Churches of the World,* published for the Copenhagen meeting (1929) of the Lutheran World Convention. Elected bishop in 1933, he was the first leader of Bavaria's Lutherans to bear that title. Sensing impending storm, he at once entered the rising conflict between the nazified "German Christians" and the solidly evangelical Lutherans. He called together representatives of the other Lutheran churches on May 14, 1933, and discussed with them the possibilities of a "Lutheran branch" within the nascent, nazi-manipulated German Evangelical

Church (DEK). When this proved impracticable, in August 1934 he took the lead in forming a Lutheran Council, comprising the bishops of Württemberg (Theophil Wurm), Hanover (August Marahrens), and Bavaria.

In November, 1934, after both Wurm and Meiser had been dramatically liberated from a period of house arrest, the three bishops again proposed the formation of a Lutheran branch, emphasizing the aim of eventually having but one Lutheran church within the DEK. A pact, signed in February, 1935, and later including also Baden, pledged these bishops to the attainment of their goal. Here the growing supranational quality of Lutheranism entered as a strengthening factor. At the Paris meeting (1935) of the Lutheran World Convention Meiser was elected to that body's executive committee. He likewise became a member of the executive committee of the Lutheran General Conference, an organization devoted to unity since its founding in 1868 and operative mainly in Germany, though also in Scandinavia.

With a parting of the anti-nazi evangelical forces after the 1936 synod of the Confessing Church at Bad Oeynhausen, Meiser and others set up the Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, subsequently called simply the Luther Council. When its crucial test came in 1939, Meiser managed to hold it together.

During the war years, Theophil Wurm, bishop of Wüttemberg and Meiser's comrade in resistance, took the lead in forming what later became the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the successor to the completely ineffective DEK. Meiser, however, was not to be dissuaded from his hopes for an explicitly Lutheran organization, for he believed the time had come for overcoming the territorial fragmentation which had blighted Germany's Lutheranism since the days of the Reformation and had robbed Lutherans of a fuller understanding of the church.

On August 25, 1945, the eve of the famous first postwar meeting of German churchmen at Treysa, Bishop Meiser proposed the creation of the United Lutheran Church in Germany. Bishop Wurm, influenced by Karl Barth, Niemöller, and others, balked, throwing his full weight instead into the formation of the more inclusive Evangelical Church in Germany. The practical necessity for such an overall organization was obvious. Functional details, including a constitution, would have to be worked out later. Everyone understood that the survival of even a semblance of church order was a miracle. Besides, the absence of the former state interference brought a sense of freedom and responsibility new —despite the misery and ruins on every hand—to the German scene.

Meiser, meanwhile, accepted the delay of his own plans and settled for the drafting of a constitution for the still-to-be-organized VELKD. He persisted despite further difficulties. The Württemberg Lutherans in 1946 declined further participation in the drafting of the VELKD constitution. Less convinced Lutherans and men from the Union churches charged the VELKD would spell ruin for the slowly rising EKD. At the second big Treysa meeting, in June, 1947, the VELKD men

assured their brethren that they had no such designs, pledging full support of the EKD while consolidating their own Lutheran constituencies. As a compromise, it was agreed to harmonize the draft constitution of the VELKD with the draft constitution of the EKD.

At Eisenach, on July 6, 1948, just prior to the constitutional convention of the EKD, the first meeting of the new VELKD adopted the duly harmonized constitution. On January 1, 1949, the VELKD became officially constituted, and a new era in the history of German Lutheranism began. Hans Meiser could look back on years of intensive effort and patient persistence, sensing also a generous measure of divine guidance. Humanly, his achievements were never done single-handed. He had skillfully picked and used able advisers. The first General Synod of the VELKD, meeting in Leipzig January 25-27, 1949, elected Meiser the presiding bishop, an office which he filled with distinction until 1955.

Events since 1948 have proved the VELKD to be a stabilizing force in the EKD. The timely harmonization of the constitutions of these two bodies prevented an overlapping of functions and reduced the possibility of conflict to a minimum. The fact that since 1949 the same man, Dr. Heinz Brunotte, has been general secretary of both the EKD and the VELKD speaks well for the kind of partnership Bishop Meiser originally envisioned. His insistence, moreover, on the necessity of recovering the churchly character of Lutheranism, as contrasted with the long history of state interference, was salutary but not always easy to take. Meiser, and others with him, claimed the VELKD to be a church, while the EKD, as stated in its constitution, remains a "federation of Lutheran, Reformed, and Union churches."

Bishop Meiser has exercised restraint in courting the nearly 16,000,000 Lutherans in the Union churches. Indeed, most of the churches in the former Old Prussian Union have since 1950 constituted themselves as the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU), with functions and aims similar to those of the VELKD. Yet a former Union church like Thuringia is today a loyal member of the VELKD and of the LWF. At the February, 1955, meeting of the LWF executive committee in Vienna the former Union church of Pomerania was received into membership; yet Pomerania has also declared its intention to remain in the new EKU. Common bonds between the VELKD and the EKU are meanwhile being strengthened by the adoption of a joint hymnal and efforts to agree upon a uniform text of Luther's Small Catechism.

As Bishop Meiser retires, the church fronts are anything but fixed. "The days of territorialism in German church life," declared Professor Wilhelm Maurer of Erlangen at the VELKD General Synod in Weimar, "are numbered. Amid a rising confessional tide today, genuine church union can succeed only where a genuine awareness of the church prevails." Bishop Meiser leaves to his successors heavy responsibilities and wide opportunities, charged with a deep concern for Lutheran unity in an ecumenical fellowship. His humility, courage, and devotion to Christian duty have made him

a true pastor of pastors, and have given stature to the office of evangelical bishop. (Sources: *Informationsblatt . . . niederdeutschen lutherischen Landeskirchen,* 1. Aprilheft 1955, No. 7, 100-101. *Evangelisch-lutherische Kirchenzeitung,* 15. Maerz 1955, Nr. 6, 85-86. Brunotte, *Die Grundordnung der EKD* (Berlin: Renner, 1954), 149. *Ev. Pressedienst,* ZA, Nr. 96, 26. April 1955, 1, 2.)

Message of EKD Synod to the Congregations in All Germany

"Since the end of the war the Synod and Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany have ever and again . . . professed their duty to pray and work for peace among the peoples. In face of the contradictions which still divide the world, and which also tear our people apart, we declare anew and along with all the Christians in the world that we know ourselves to be called to deeds of peace, and we reject every thought of resolving present tensions through war. . . .

"In behalf of all of you we repeat the insistent plea, to those who have the might and the responsibility, that they make it possible once again for our people to enjoy a common life in freedom. At last put an end [we say to them] to the inhuman separation which means unspeakable misery for so many people and which remains a continuing threat to world peace!

"We are not in a position to utilize the full authority of the church to chart a political course which would assure the attainment of this goal. It is a source of grave concern to us at this synod that our views diverge as to the proper course to take. We can not, in any case, validate some one political view, be it ever so correct, on the authority of the Word of God. Rather, we must warn you against wanting to hand out a political opinion as though it were God's truth. . . .

"In the present dilemma we hold fast to the fact that evangelical Christians have a duty to share the responsibility for the course our people take in the hour of political decision.

"We summon you to intercessory prayer for all who exercise political responsibility in public office, and warn against indifference toward those serving in places of authority.

"We deny no Christian the right, on grounds of a sense of political responsibility, to raise his voice publicly when he sees his fellowman in danger. . . . But we earnestly admonish those pastors, who feel themselves constrained to such action, to remember their office as servants of the divine Word and not to cause offense by confusing things divine and human. . . .

"Let us make no other use of our resorting to conscience than that we permit ourselves to be brought into the presence of God by his Word, and so think through our responsibility for our fellowmen.

"We thank God for such fellowship which, despite all separation, we are still permitted to have, and do not give up hoping, in his presence, for the reunion of our people.

"We beseech God that his grace might remain the last word over all our contradictions. If in his sight our ways are foolish and contrary to his will, then may he let them come to naught, not in his wrath but in his

mercy, and so may he turn all things to the best.

"If in his wisdom he should decide not to fulfill our deep desires, and instead to lead us another way which is not to our liking, he remains nevertheless with us in his grace and in his Word and sacrament. There is no conceivable situation in which he would not be Lord. In following him who was crucified for us we may always and everywhere know our lives hid with him, and thank him for it. His glorious Name be ever praised." (Source: *Evangelische Welt,* 1955, 159, 162.)

VELKD Message on Unity

"The General Synod of the United Lutheran Church in Germany, composed of delegates from East and West who are assembled in Weimar, is profoundly moved by the tensions and dangers which threaten the peace of the world. It is not for the church organizations to make political decisions, but it is the duty of Christians to sharpen the consciences of all men. The Gospel admonishes us to guard against hatred and to foster peace. The church has repeatedly spoken in this vein during the past years. The church therefore pleads with all in authority to make way for a just peace among the nations and peoples of the world. The church pleads with all in authority to make it possible at long last for the German people to be reunited. With grave earnestness the church pleads with all in authority to strive that the fantastic technical powers, which today have been placed in human hands, be used not for the annihilation but for the well-being of all the peoples of this earth." (Source: *Ev. Pressedienst,* ZA, Nr. 97, 27 April 1955, 2.)

E. Theodore Bachmann

Correspondence and Comment[1]

Mark Twain, Mrs. Eddy, and Christian Science

Some of the best bits of evidence of changes that were made in Christian Science literature to lift Mrs. Eddy to a higher plane than she was originally able to occupy were supplied a half century ago by Mark Twain in his notable work, *Christian Science.*

Neither Dr. Wallick nor his Scientist critics (see Quarterly, Feb., 1955, pp. 69-76) make any mention of this work. This was one of the serious books by the noted humorist, and while it reflects his amusing manner of expression it is still withal one of the most trenchant critiques of Mrs. Eddy ever written. If the devastating statements he made about Mrs. Eddy were not true and not fully evidenced in her writings as he quotes them so frequently, Mark Twain could and probably would have been sued for slander. The fact that he was not sued and that continued re-editing of her writings did follow his exposures give evidence of the truthfulness of his critique.

Several articles in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in 1899 and in the *North American Review* during 1902 and 1903 marked the beginning of Mark Twain's study of Mary Baker Eddy. These were later expanded into a complete book and published by Harpers in 1907. The principal thesis set forth is that the published text of *Science and Health* was not the language of Mrs. Eddy. He believes that her *Autobiography,* the *Prefaces* to various books, and the *Poems* were her own production and in her own language—a language he characterized as "third-class," "the uncalculated puttering of a novice." In contrast, the language of *Science and Health* was of an entirely different sort: "the style smartly improves and the clumsy little technical offenses disappear. . . . The immense contrast between the legitimate English of *Science and Health* and the bastard English of Mrs. Eddy's miscellaneous work, and between the maturity of the one diction and the juvenility of the other, suggests—compels—the question, Are there *two* guns? . . . None but a seasoned Christian Scientist can examine a literary animal of Mrs. Eddy's creation and tell which end of it the tail is on. She is easily the most baffling and bewildering writer in the literary trade."

The claims of "inspiration" both by Mrs. Eddy and by her followers are refuted at length by exposing the many contradictory statements she makes about this and other matters; so also her conflicting statements about seeking to establish herself as a new Mother Mary, "the chosen successor to and equal of Jesus" (as stated in the *Christian Science Journal* for April, 1889). Mark Twain sets forth at length her growing megalomania, her arbitrary

[1] The editors of the Lutheran Quarterly welcome the exchange of opinion and comment on the part of readers and contributors in the hope that this may lead to further clarification and, if need be, correction.

and absolute domination of the organizational machinery, her mercenary proclivities and astuteness.

There is some questioning as to the source of her teachings, their possible relation to those of Quimby—who by odd coincidence died in the same year that Mrs. Eddy claimed to have "discovered" Christian Science. From the various lines of evidence he cites, Mark Twain concludes: "I cannot and do not believe that Mrs. Eddy originated any of the thoughts and reasonings out of which the book *Science and Health* is constructed; and I cannot and do not believe that she ever wrote any part of that book (except the Preface). . . . I think she has from the very beginning been claiming as her own another person's book. . . . And I think the reason—and the only reason—that he has not protested is because his work was not exposed to print until after he was safely dead."

Thus fifty years ago Mark Twain pointed out that even in Mrs. Eddy's lifetime her true character and the truth about her writings was being distorted by the church to present a highly glorified portrait. On the basis of his investigations he had come to see and know her as "grasping, sordid, penurious, famishing for everything she sees—money, power, glory—vain, untruthful, jealous, despotic, arrogant, insolent, pitiless where thinkers and hypnotists are concerned, illiterate, shallow, incapable of reasoning outside of commercial lines, immeasurably selfish. . . ." "Fairness requires that their [her followers'] view be stated here. It is the opposite of the one which I have drawn from Mrs. Eddy's history and from her By-Laws. To her followers she is this: Patient, gentle, loving, compassionate, noblehearted, unselfish, sinless, widely cultured, splendidly equipped mentally, a profound thinker, an able writer, a divine personage, an inspired messenger whose acts are dictated from the Throne, and whose every utterance is the Voice of God."

Quimby, Eddy, Evans, Blavatsky, Fillmore—all are much alike; their teachings incorporate and Americanize various elements of Buddhism and Brahmanism. But the attractive name "Christian Science" has come to lure many erstwhile Christians who read into the terminology of this cult some Christian ideas that are not basically there; and the ambiguity in the language of *Science and Health* well enables any member to believe as he desires or has been led.

WALTER H. BECK

Book Reviews and Notices[1]

Faith Active in Love. By George W. Forell. New York: The American Press, 1954. 198 pages. $3.75.

This is a significant book. Not only is it one of the few additions to the literature of Luther interpretation in English, but it comes in an area where a work based on the sources has been sorely needed. Heretofore, knowledge of Luther's social ethics has in this country been based upon secondary works, at best Troeltsch's *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches,* at worst the ill-informed polemics of Dean Inge or Peter Wiener. Professor Forell does not attempt to portray Luther as a plaster saint, nor justify every development in the Lutheran church since his time, but sets out the systematic principles of his social ethics, recognizing at the same time the limiting factors, historical, social, and theological, which affected the outcome of his teaching.

What distinguished Luther's work from that of some of his contemporary critics of the church was that he was not content to register an academic objection, but was determined to influence the character of the society in which he lived. His work as reformer was thus not only individual but social in character. It is precisely this, however, that the critics of Luther deny. They contend either that he had no social ethics at all, since he removed the social from the realm of the Gospel's influence, or that his social ethics was a pragmatic adaptation to the circumstances of the moment. Almost half of this volume consists of quotations from Luther's work, many of them hitherto not available in English, showing the consistent principles underlying his work. These quotations comprise one of the most valuable features of this book, providing as they do the material for an evaluation of Luther's thought in this controversial realm.

Dr. Forell points out that one of the chief reasons for misunderstanding Luther's thought is the failure to grasp his method of thought. Those who insist on a system of thought where all dialectic antitheses are resolved in a comprehensive synthesis have genuine difficulty with Luther. For he is concerned not so much with symmetry of structure as with correspondence to the facts. His objection to the scholastic philosophers is precisely that their wonderfully balanced systems do not describe the actual human situation. His own thought has been characterized as "existential." He makes statements which seem contradictory, e.g., "The Christian man is the most free Lord of all, subject to no one; the Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to every one." This he does not out of love for paradox, but merely because man's situation in life is so complex as to be incapable of resolution in any other way. He is interested not in metaphysical speculation, but in life; hence his methodological principle is functional, evaluating all ethical standards in the light of the part they play in relating man to God.

Luther rejects all eudaemonistic ethics and asserts the centrality of justification for the realm of ethics. It is only in justification that the sinner encounters the God of love, and this experience becomes the starting point not only for his relation to God, but for his relation to his fellowmen as well. Faith becomes active in love toward the neighbor. In faith the believer receives Christ; in love he gives himself to his neighbor. For Luther's predecessors, as for most of his successors, justification was only one doctrine among many. He exalted it to the positive of the organizing principle of theology, and in addition, stressed its importance as an experience from which man's religious and ethical life could flow.

The impact of the Gospel upon the world

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1 Books reviewed or noticed in these pages may be purchased through your church's publication house.

is made through the believer who has encountered God in Christ. His obedience to God is not manifested in obedience to an institution or to a law but in response in love in the circumstances of his calling. He serves God in his neighbor, by doing "that which lies before him." God meets the man in the "orders," the divinely given structures of the world, such as political order, family, and the institutions of society. This is, however, not unqualified, as some of Luther's critics maintain, but seen always from a theocentric point of view. The law and the "orders" exist for the sake of the Gospel, and the divine purpose must be paramount at all times. The quietistic Luther who equates obedience to the ruler with obedience to God is not to be found in his own writings but is the joint production of his successors and his critics.

Professor Forell notes, however, that Luther's own intensely eschatological outlook must share the blame for the misunderstanding of his teaching. So vivid was his expectation of the end of the world that he considered it hardly worth while to give much attention to improving society. When one is about to move into a new house, one does not spend much money fixing the ruins of the old home. This accounts for the fact that Luther's insights did not find adequate expression even in his own career.

The clear, energetic, incisive style of the author makes the book a pleasure to read. This pleasure is enhanced by the excellent design and typography. Some readers may object to the prominence of the footnotes, some of which occupy more space on the page than the text. But in view of the importance of getting Luther's own words before the reader the arrangement of footnotes is one of the advantages of this volume.

W. A. QUANBECK

Kerygma und Mythos. Vol. III: Das Gespräch mit der Philosophie. Edited by Hans-Werner Bartsch. Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1954. 101 pages.

The discussion of Rudolf Bultmann's views has entered upon a new stage that can only be observed with extreme interest. So far we have heard theologians of all possible shades of position express their objections or their agreement or—with most of them—both. In this third volume of the documents of this controversy one of the leading existentialist philosophers, Karl Jaspers, takes the floor. The theological reader, who was impressed by Bultmann's thorough philosophical training and perhaps felt his own lack of competence in this field, must truly be astonished as he reads that Jaspers regards Bultmann's view of philosophy as misguided. He writes: "His concept of philosophy, which, as it seems to me, is alien even to Heidegger" (Bultmann's philosophical authority) "conforms to the scientific philosophy after the pattern of the professorial philosophy of the nineteenth century" (p. 15). And he rejects also Bultmann's concept of natural science which seems outmoded to him. Over against Bultmann's insistence that theology must accept the basis of the scientific concept of the universe (*Weltbild*) as it is common to modern man, Jaspers holds that Bultmann exaggerates the difference between ancient and modern thinking. Moreover he claims that something like a modern *Weltbild* does not exist, because modern science has discarded every attempt at forming a consistent concept of the universe. Jaspers criticises Bultmann's confusion of objective and existential thinking, which becomes apparent in his distinction between existentialist (*existential*) and existential (*existentiell*)—the first signifying the objective analysis of the elements of existence, the second the acceptance of the results of this analysis in the practical decisions of life. Bultmann, to Jaspers, produces a blend of objective analysis and practical decision which overlooks the border-line between the objective and the subjective activities of our mind. If you have proved something you have not necessarily taken it over into your life in practical decision. A true acceptance of the biblical values cannot be produced by scientific thinking. It is a spiritual event. Here we are in the realm of the pastor, not of the scholar. Jaspers does not think that the preacher of the Gospel can find much help in the work of Bultmann, though he values very highly Bultmann's contribution

to the historical understanding of the New Testament.

Furthermore, Jaspers takes issue with Bultmann's interpretation of myth. Bultmann takes myth as the language of a past age which expresses certain spiritual truths, and he states it as the task of exegesis to eliminate this mythological element and thus to distill the truth. To Jaspers this process of subtraction is impossible. To him myth is the necessary and indispensable language of religion which cannot be eliminated because it is the only way of pointing to the transcendent world and to express thoughts that are in fact inexpressible. Thus Bultmann is right only in so far as he points to the difference between myth and historical reality. A myth is not true in a scientific sense but it is a symbol, a sign of spiritual truth. For that very reason the content of a myth cannot be proved. It has no general validity. It cannot be demonstrated, it can only be accepted or rejected. When myth stands against myth each must prove its validity by inner persuasion.

This leads us to the last point of Jaspers' criticism—which seems to carry a strong emotional element. He distinguishes in the attitude over against religion between liberality (as distinguished from liberalism) and orthodoxy. Liberality realizes that an objective foundation for faith in an absolute religion does not exist. It hears the language of the transcendent in every myth, keeps aloof from defined confession, and hears the voice of revelation in the holy writings of Israel as well as of Greece or Asia. Orthodoxy knows a ready made answer to the question about God—the absolute revelation —and tries to impose this answer upon the hearer.

Bultmann, according to Jaspers' analysis, tries to save the essence of religion by a combination of false liberalism and false orthodoxy: he accepts a maximum—much too large a maximum!—of rationalistic assumptions with the purpose of stubbornly defending a remainder of orthodox teaching: the Pauline doctrine of justification through faith alone—"the Lutheran view with its terrible consequences" (p. 42). At the end you have the impression that Jaspers' strongest objection against Bultmann is the claim of absolute truth for the Christian message. He is very kindly disposed over against all types of religion, but it seems that the concept of a unique and authoritative revelation is to him the unpardonable sin.

This reviewer never felt so much in agreement with Bultmann as when he read Bultmann's answer to this attack. Bultmann states that Jaspers does not understand the problem of interpretation of Scripture as it presents itself in the situation of the pastor in the pulpit. Bultmann explains that it is his purpose to help the pastor in this situation, to let him see what he can preach as absolute Christian truth even after he has discarded the objective truth of the mythological element in the Bible. Jaspers, he feels, though he also does not accept miracles, has no answer at all to this problem. The claim of absolute validity cannot be dissociated from the concept of revelation. This claim, however, cannot be proved, it can only be accepted in the event of faith. This insistence upon the absolute authority of revelation is the refreshing feature in Bultmann's answer.

Hans Werner Bartsch gives a very good analysis of the controversy between Jaspers and Bultmann. He points out that Jaspers cannot understand Bultmann because he does not feel himself addressed by the Word of God. The center of this controversy is the question: does absolute revelation exist or not? This question cannot be answered scientifically but only in the event of faith. The answer decides whether we appreciate all myths equally in their beauty and their relative truth or if we recognize a special unique value in the myths of the Bible. If so we will try to demythologize them in order to distill their basic truth.

The two remaining contributions in this volume are not directly connected with the controversy Jaspers vs. Bultmann. Fritz Buri, a systematic theologian, gives the outline of a theology of existence. He goes beyond Bultmann by discarding entirely the concept of kerygma, of a salvation-event, and tries to understand the whole Christian message as an interpretation of human existence. The insight expressed in this interpretation is absolute to Buri; the form is

relative and developed under the influence of Christian tradition.

Kurt Reidemaister, a distinguished mathematician with a thorough philosophical training and a close contact with theological problems, makes an interesting attempt at testing Bultmann's views on a more neutral ground by applying his methods to Augustine's *De Civitate Dei.* He shows that we find truth in Augustine's thoughts though we would never accept his scientific concept of the universe. His contribution gives an able apology for some of the elements of truth in Bultmann's thinking.

The most surprising result of this new phase in the controversy with Bultmann is this, that even the reader who is highly critical of Bultmann suddenly feels himself at his side over against the attack from Jaspers, because here Bultmann becomes the champion of revealed religion over against scientific relativism in the field of faith.

The point of agreement, however, between Jaspers and Bultmann remains to us a point of objection. Both discard the concept of a history of salvation and understand the Bible mythologically. Their disagreement merely concerns the question of how to deal with these myths. But we uphold, whatever a sound criticism may have to say about individual stories of the Bible, that the basic content of the Bible is history, not myth, though a history that shows the intrusion of the eternal world into the course of earthly events and therefore defies a thorough treatment by historical methods. It is true that, for instance, the fact of Christ's resurrection cannot be scientifically proved, but must be accepted by faith. That, however, does not mean that it belongs in the realm of myth. Even Bartsch admits that religion practically cannot do without the mythical language (p. 78). "The preacher does not discard the mythical language. He continues to speak of the miracle of the resurrection, because he has no other means of speaking of the eschatological activity of God in a plastic way" (p. 69). It is true that Bartsch hastens to add that the preacher, using this language, does not mean the objective reality of a miraculous event. And yet we have a right to ask: If Bartsch is right with his admission, does that not show that the whole distinction between mythological language and underlying truth contains a basic flaw? We cannot do without this language, because just this language expresses the event that the Bible presents to us as truth.

PAUL LEO

The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament. By James B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954. xviii + 353 pages. $20.

A most valuable project was started by Prof. James Pritchard when he edited the volume *Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament* (reviewed in these columns in May, 1951). He now has brought it to completion with this new companion volume of pictures. The two books, both quarto in size, provide for English readers a tool comparable in value to Hugo Gressman's *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum Alten Testament* (2nd ed.; vol. i, 1926; vol. ii, 1927), a work that is now difficult to obtain and already twenty-five years out of date. Many of the brilliant archaeological finds since 1927 at Ras Shamra, Mari, Lachish, Dead Sea, *et al.,* are here reproduced. The series accordingly provides the widest selection of illustrative material relating to the Old Testament thus far published.

The two volumes beautifully supplement each other; for they present vividly and in well-documented fashion the two types of records left by the peoples of the Near East: written documents and pictorial representation including artifacts. The latter are the more graphic, for they reveal much which is taken for granted by those who wrote.

In preparing this new volume of pictures Dr. Pritchard visited 24 museums in the Near East, Europe, and America in order to assemble a series of 769 excellently reproduced photographs and drawings of famous ancient pre-Christian monuments and artifacts. He had as an advisory committee in the selection and organization of these illustrations the following leading authorities on archeological remains: W. F. Albright, Johns Hopkins University; Étienne Drioton, Ex-Directeur Général, Service des Antiquités, Cairo; C. J. Gadd, Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian An-

tiquities, British Museum; André Parrot, Conservateur en chef des Musées Nationaux, France; E. A. Speiser, University of Pennsylvania; and John A. Wilson, University of Chicago.

The pictures are grouped under nine headings: Peoples and their Dress (66 cuts), Daily Life (162 cuts), Writings (36 cuts), Scenes from History and Monuments (86 cuts), Royalty and Dignitaries (88 cuts), Gods and their Emblems (110 cuts), the Practice of Religion (98 cuts), Myth, Legend, and Ritual on Cylinder Seals (35 cuts), Views and Plans of Excavations (63 cuts). The illustrations in each division are arranged along the lines of topics, geographical areas, or chronological divisions.

On these pages spring to life before our eyes the contemporaries of Abraham and Isaac, Isaiah and Jeremiah, common folk of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Hittite, and Syrian origin. We see them in their strange attire, going about their everyday activities in agriculture, commerce, craftsmanship, warfare, hunting, music, and games. We see how they wrote, how they worshipped. We are introduced to their leaders, many of whom struck terror in the hearts of the people of Israel; to their gods, to whose worship the Israelites often succumbed.

A fine system of cross reference calls attention to features or objects represented outside the main section dealing with that particular subject. A ten-page index which includes a glossary of the more technical terms enables a student to find illustrations on a wide variety of subjects.

Ninety quarto pages in two columns each are devoted to a concise description and bibliography of each illustration. Information such as the present location of the object, museum numbers, provenience, date of discovery, the material of which the object is made, size, the date to which it is attributed, has been carefully documented. Also are included four maps locating the archaeological sites of the Nile river, Palestine, the Anatolian and upper Mesopotamian river valley, and the lower Mesopotamian river valley.

Here is a book that is worth going without a few meals in order to buy. It should provide many hours of intellectual stimulation and nourishment. Princeton University Press is to be commended for this fine example of book making. As for Dr. Pritchard, he deserves hearty congratulations and thanks for his service to the cause of biblical scholarship.

ROBERT H. BOYD

The Fulness of Time. By John Marsh. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952. 189 pages. $3.

Characteristic of studies in biblical theology today is the concern for the originality and uniqueness of biblical categories. A generation ago whatever in the Bible could not be subsumed under the categories of prevailing philosophies was ignored as insignificant or depreciated as naive or primitive. Today a humbler and more perceptive spirit prevails, and a willingness to grant significance to ideas, symbols and structures which are not at first congenial to western ways of thought. One evidence of this spirit is the widespread interest in the biblical conception of time, which is effectively treated by Professor Marsh in this volume.

The biblical writers do not share the modern interest in exact measurement of time. Their interest in time is not in its relation to a chronological scale, but rather in its content. The term "harvest time" for them is not primarily the exact weeks of summer in which crops are gathered in, but rather in the total agricultural, social and religious activities that constitute the harvest. Their vocabulary has comparatively few terms for exact measures of time, a circumstance that has caused some modern scholars to give them low grades for historcial accuracy. But while there is no obsession with calendars and chronometers, there is the conviction that events in time can be significant, because in them a man may discover the meaning of his life in encounter with the living God. Thus the prophetic interpretation of the events of the Exodus sees in them no unrelated series of casual incidents, but the revelation of the God of Israel, who wills his people's redemption. The Exodus becomes the dominating factor in the life of Israel, and the basis of its assurance that the living

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God has revealed himself in the election of Israel as his people.

Professor Marsh's debt to C. H. Dodd becomes evident in his discussion of the New Testament fulfillment. The content of Jesus' preaching is that the significant time is at hand and that in him, in his teaching and his deeds, the powers of the age to come are already present and effective. In him the end or goal has arrived while the process is still under way. The significance of the fulfillment in history is explored for its implications for the Christian church, for a Christian philosophy of history, for the problem of universal history, and for the problem of the end of time.

Comparison with Oscar Cullmann's *Christ and Time* is inevitable, especially inasmuch as Professor Marsh devotes an appendix to a criticism of it. He objects chiefly to Professor Cullmann's inadequate schematization, in attempting to make geometrical terms express dynamic relationships. The term "midpoint" hardly does justice to Christ's work as fulfillment, and the suggestion that the biblical approach to time is linear is inadequate and misleading.

The Fulness of Time is perhaps most notable for its excellent exposition of the work of Christ as fulfillment of the prophetic preparation and for its indication of the believer's participation in Christ as the realization of the Father's purpose. Marsh's contribution in this book arouses interest in the projected discussion of what historians and philosophers can contribute to this topic.

W. A. Quanbeck

Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek. By Bruce M. Metzger. Princeton, N. J.; Published by the Author, 1955. 118 pages. $1.25.

One of the problems confronting the beginning student of Greek is that of vocabulary. He cannot hope to master the more than 5,500 different Greek words in the New Testament, but unless he knows those which occur most frequently, his reading is too labored and slow to be enjoyed, and is shortly abandoned, to the impoverishment of Bible study. Professor Metzger has provided a convenient and inexpensive handbook for the use of the beginner or the pastor who would like to recover use of his Greek. The book has two main parts: a listing of the 1,055 Greek words which occur ten times or more in the New Testament, arranged in order of frequency, and a listing of words classified according to their root. A series of appendices list the members of the Indo-European family of languages, prepositions used in composition with verbs, correlative pronouns and adjectives, principal parts of some important verbs, and feminine nouns of the second declension.

Systematic study of the first section is an efficient way of acquiring vocabulary, since the commonest words are learned first. The second section then provides additional vocabulary akin to words already known. Numerous English derivatives are noted to ease the student's progress from known to unknown.

Our Christian Symbols. By Friedrich Rest. Illustrated by Harold Minton. Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press 1954. 86 pages.

A short handbook on the symbolism of the Christian Church, covering both the classical "old line" symbolism stretching back to antiquity, and the more recent, including symbolism still in the making. The manner of approach and explanation of the various objects of symbolism is, in a number of instances, different and refreshing. Of particular interest are the pages on "Worship Aids" and "New Creations in Symbolism." The discussion on vestments is the least satisfactory. The book is written from the point of view of the Reformed Protestant; but the author is obviously a lover of symbolism, and he knows his stuff. Not least among the excellences of the book are the illustrations, which are very well done, both by the illustrator, Harold Minton, and the printers. The old standard "Church Symbolism" by F. R. Webber is more complete; but Mr. Rest's manual is more readable and compact. For those not interested in an exhaustive, erudite presentation, we recommend this little volume; it will qualify for reading pleasure and "eye" pleasure as well as for reference.

Laurence N. Field

The archivist of THE LUTHERAN QUARTERLY, Dr. Harvey D. Hoover, reports that back files of Volume I, Numbers 1, 2, and 3, are completely exhausted. Since these numbers are desperately needed, the Circulation Manager is offering to extend the donor's subscription for two numbers in return for any of the back issues listed above. Anyone willing to enter into such an exchange will please communicate with Dr. Paul M. Lindberg, Augustana Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois.